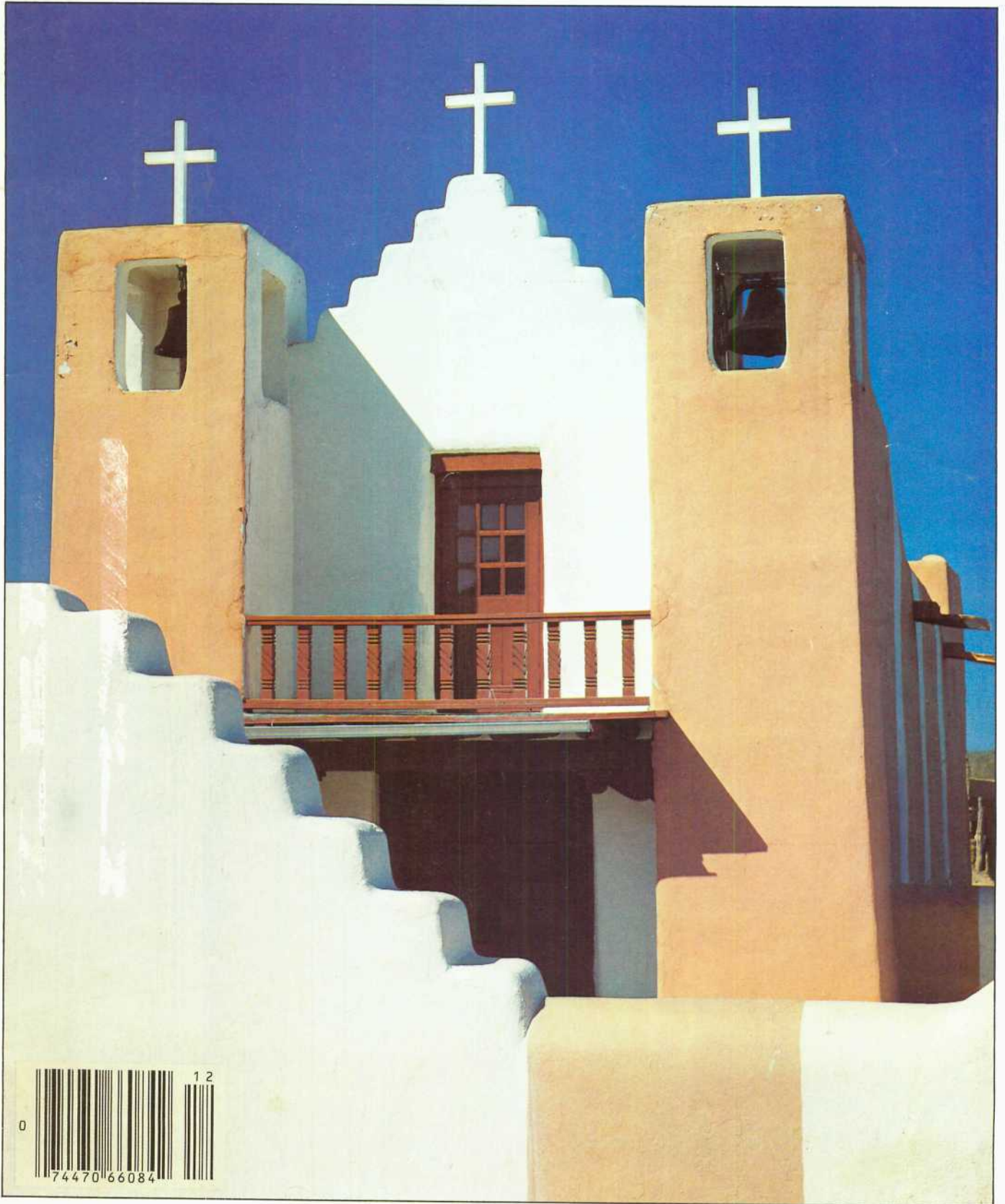
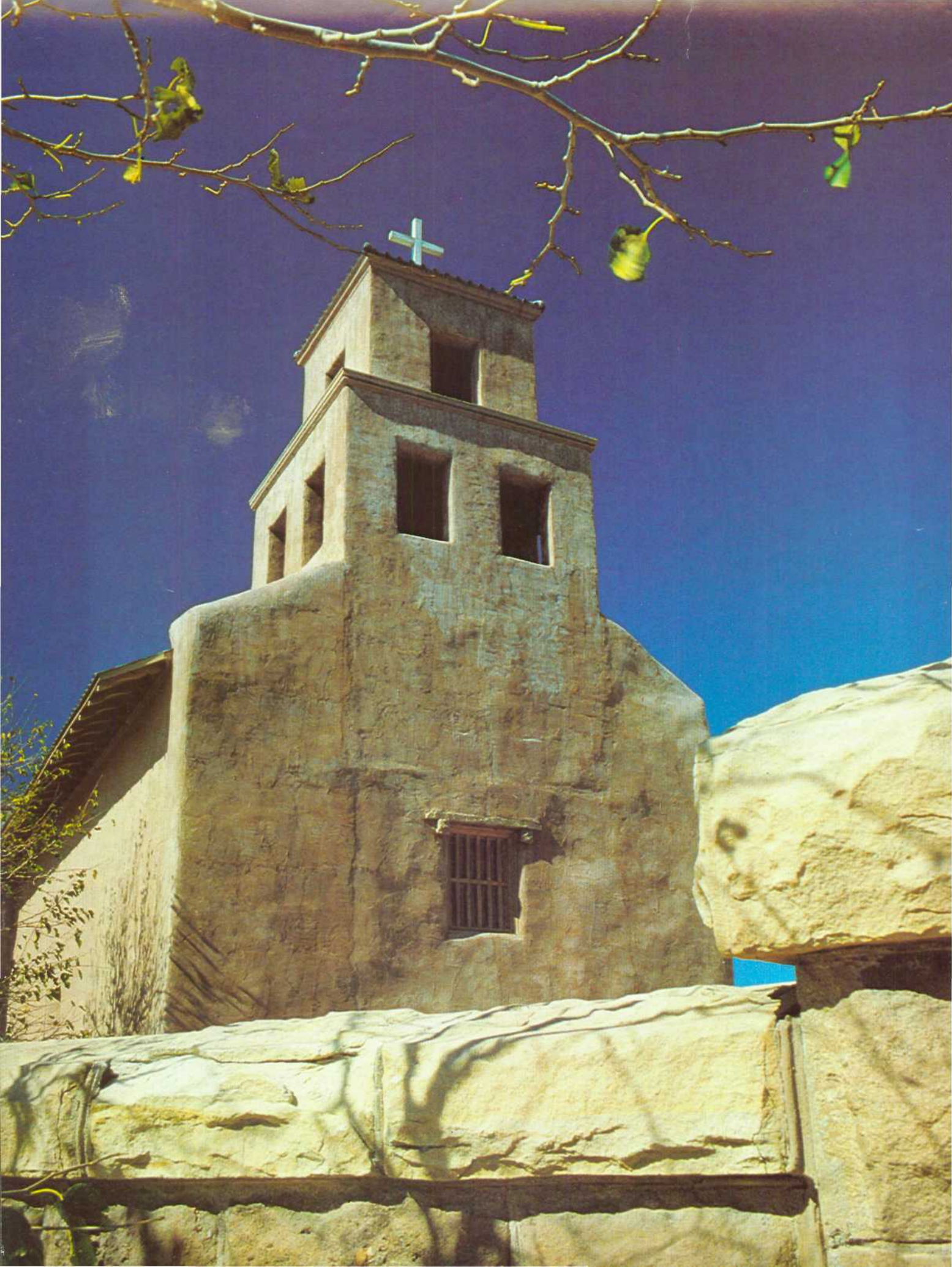


Desert

December, 1981
\$2.00





Desert

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHWEST

Religion

Joseph Wood Krutch

by Andrew Steuer III

Steuer shares with us his feelings regarding the desert mystique as shown in Krutch's writing.

page 18

Desert Christmas

by Chris Goebel

An endearing touch of the past, with Christmas in the desert remembered.

page 21

Feast for the Soul

by Pamela and Russell Bamert

The Bamerts take us to their seasonal retreat. They share the Feast of our Lady of Guadalupe — celebrated by the Tortugas near Las Cruces, New Mexico.

page 23

The Loss of the Shaman

by Peter Aleshire

Ruby Modesto was the last of the Cahuilla Indian puls. With her passing many customs and traditions were lost. Aleshire relates the effect of this loss within the tribal religion.

page 26

Churches of the Southwest

by Stephen Simpson

Various photographers have sent us their favorite places of worship in the desert.

page 30

Desert Christ Park

by Jack W. Kriege

Kriege visited this unusual park in the desert and was deeply touched. He gives us the background and shares his experience.

page 37



page 24



page 56

A Desert Christmas Card

In this section we show you an ingenious array of decorations in the desert.

page 39

Willa Cather

by Dennis Mayes

Willa Cather led the way down a lonely road into the desert. Mayes gives us an appreciation of her motivation and the results.

page 42

Winterhaven

by Dan B. McCarthy

The desert community of Winterhaven, Arizona captures the Christmas spirit with a multitude of lights and displays.

page 46

Man, Mask and God

by S. Lee Rourke

Rourke has studied Indian religion and ways of life.

page 56

Departments

4 Editor's Letter

6 Letters

10 Living Desert

12 Chuck Wagon Cookin'

15 Traces in the Sand

51 Our Desert Heritage

52 Desert Calendar

54 Desert Rockhound

61 Trading Post

Cover: The tranquility of the Church of St. Jerome in the Taos Pueblo, New Mexico has been artfully captured by Jerry Sieve, photographer.

Inside front cover: Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Santa Fe, New Mexico, presented here in graceful repose. Stephen Simpson, photographer.

EDITOR'S LETTER

Heavy-hearted/Light-hearted

It is sometimes a mystery to me how I got here, but I know I belong as editor of *Desert* magazine. If this is the time of year to express great joy, then I am the man with all the reasons to do so.

It is a privilege to be here. To say that my job puts me in the heart of things is an understatement. I receive a fabulous variety of mail. One reader is disgusted with the direction of the magazine and has cancelled his subscription. This is not just whining—usually the complaint is backed up with an expression of affection for *Desert* magazine and the testimony of a stack of magazines that covers decades. Something they love has changed beyond their comprehension. An equally long-time and passionate reader writes of great joy and support for what we are doing; sends declarations that *Desert* is finally becoming what it always had the potential to be.

I get letters from people who have suspended subscriptions because they can no longer read or because their spouse, the one who read the magazine, has died. I get totally incomprehensible letters. Some older people write about how much they love the magazine, but their limited or fixed incomes just will not allow them to subscribe. A young woman wrote recently that I would not receive the article her boyfriend was going to write for us. She said he had been thrilled about the encouragement and the chance to contribute to *Desert*. The article will not be here because he was killed by a drunk driver while on his way to write it.

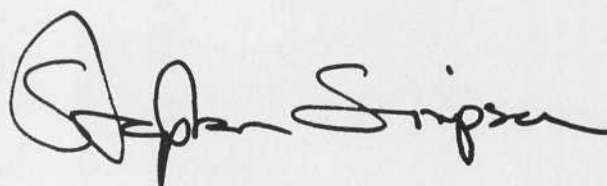
Do you want my job? I would love to hear why you want my job. I am in love with it and will not give it up—but I will be happy to share it with you.

As you can see, the responsibility that I have to you is wonderful. All of this is deep and rich emotionally. It is year-round, not just at Christmas when we all seem to care just a bit more. It is a weight, but a lovely one.

I cannot please everyone, so the first thing I try to do is please myself, and many writers will testify that that is not an easy thing to do. It sounds indulgent, and maybe it is, but it is tempered with plenty of input from the staff and from you. Even still, it is difficult to know what you want. So, sometimes we get a bit literary or intellectual, and other times we are downright cornball. This issue is a perfect example of that mixture.

My message is that sometimes this position and involvement with the magazine and the people who support it is draining—but please don't spare me. I encourage you to speak your mind as well as you can. The best reading in the magazine is the letters section. Keep 'em coming and we'll get a better magazine whether we all like it or not.

Merry Christmas,



Thom Vollenweider

Desert

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHWEST

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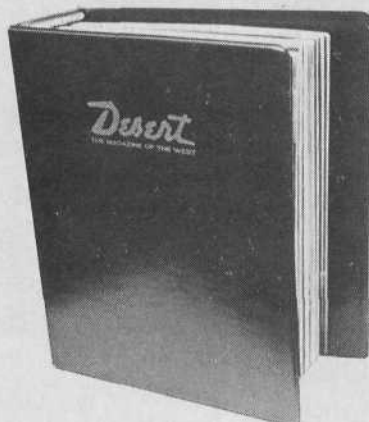
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LETTERS

Gold In Them Thar Hills

I am a subscriber to *Desert* magazine and I really enjoy it. I have a question. I am a Ham radio operator and one day I heard a person on two meters say he was going to Butterfield Canyon to look for gold. It must be within 100 miles as that is the range of the two meter band.

Would you have any idea how I could go about finding where Butterfield Canyon might be?

C.H. Wall
Central, UT

Any help out there?

Too High To Pay

I have been paying \$9 a year since 1980. Now it's \$15 a year. I'm not going to pay \$15. Ever since you took over Mr. Stephen Simpson I'm going to miss my *Desert* magazine.

Harry H. Williams
Tehachapi, CA

P.S. Answer as soon as you can.

What was the question?

Living On The Edge

This week I received a notice that my long longed for magazine—my first copy—is in the mail. It took me almost a year. I'm not sure it's still being published.

Strange things happen everywhere these days. Even with the desert. I find you have so many addresses and I think I have hit them all and I see it did not do me much good, as usual, to write a letter to your and my editor. He never answers anywhere.

I'm sorry if I sound a little concerned about it, but if I do not tell someone, someone will not know that I do not get answers. Letters are just as expensive for me as well as for you or *Arizona Highways*. They always sent me very nice answers.

The price of *Desert* is higher, but the

magazine is a lot larger than used to be and I'm so anxious to begin looking through it. I haven't seen one for about 10 years and I have a lot to learn.

Thank you very much and from now on I guess I will have to write to the Editor, but I am not getting answers now-a-days either. I am sorry. I must be too far away.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Edge, Jr.
No city given

Send me some questions and I'll send you some nice answers, too.

Thank You, But...

I have been disappointed for several years with *Desert* and was almost to the point of dropping when you came up with interesting articles on our Oregon deserts and ghost towns. I live on the site of one.

I like many of the pictures, but don't care about photographer's reactions and inner thoughts of the same. While the Sierra Club has its good points, I do not want it poured down on me in my chair-side recreational trips.

Please do not renew.

Virgil McGee
Riley, OR

You have a fine magazine and I, therefore, want you to know why I am not subscribing. I am partially blind and can do little reading. I was hoping your magazine would be similar to *Arizona Highways* which always has many pictures and which is about all I can look at.

Helen Quinlan
Yucca Valley, CA

Can't You Do Better?

Desert has gone the way of all things dear and beautiful. Barking dogs instead of coyotes, English sparrows instead of native birds, Las Vegas lights instead of quiet moonlight.

Past *Desert* articles were treasured and filed, now the whole magazine goes unread. Who cares about egg cookery, railroads and all the places you can get to from Las Vegas (21 pages).

Sigh...

Claire Martin
Morongo Valley, CA

I sometimes wonder if I should renew my subscription. I don't think your magazine is as good as it used to be. Why don't you put in a lost mine story once in a while? I am a prospector and rock hound and like to read about them.

Years ago, when Randall Henderson and Jack Pepper had *Desert*, it was very good.

I once met a man that was well acquainted with Mr. Peg Leg—I never got any information from him.

Harold V. Sims
San Jacinto, CA

Thank You, Thank You

We appreciated the September issue of *Desert* magazine. The desert belongs only to those who love it and have an inward feel for it. There is a glow about the desert that simple reporting cannot present. The desert is a rose and so much more to those of us who love it and live on it in all her moods.

Thank you for the September issue. We hope there will be more like it.

Majorie and Herbert Ames
Desert Hot Springs, CA

Desert magazine has improved so much that I do not want to be without it. Please accept my renewal. The photography is especially outstanding.

I suggest again a page of verse with a western theme.

Catherine M. Manley
Prescott, AZ

I like your magazine very much. I love the desert much more than any-

one. I would die for the desert, and I see things in the desert that no other person sees. When I die, I will go sit under a juniper tree overlooking God's most beautiful place (the desert).

I am 14 years old, a young *Desert* reader. Smart, desert wise, I know almost anything about the desert. I find it fascinating to watch a dust devil or an arroyo flash flood. I have seen the Mojave, Sonoran, Chihuahuan, Great Basin, Painted Desert and other small deserts.

I am very interested in photography, and I hope to have a career with you in the future.

Your friend and best reader,

*Hank Tulloch
Salt Lake City*

Enclosed you will find my check for my subscription to *Desert* magazine. I received my first copy a few days ago and enjoyed it very much.

When my husband was alive, we enjoyed the desert very much. Since I do not get to go out there anymore, I am now able to enjoy it through your magazine.

*Virginia Buntt
Ontario, CA*

Desert's Mission

Thank you for rescuing *Desert* magazine. Former editors Randall Henderson and Choral Pepper knew of the delicate balance that exists in the desert, and how easily it can be interrupted by the inappropriate actions of man. They, too, must have been shocked to see "their" magazine turned into one espousing strip-mining, uncontrolled ORV races, and the subdivision and development of desert wildlands. As a new editor, I hope that you will recognize the "Chamber of Commerce viewpoint" for what it is—propaganda for narrow, self-serving economic interests who would exploit the desert (our public land) for their personal profit.

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Bulldozers in a forest uproot much more than trees. They drive wildlife from their natural habitats, which provide the food, water and cover all animals need.

Our country's demands for timber, minerals and energy need not be met at the expense of our wildlife resources. We *can* balance necessary economic development with conservation.



As part of its effort to preserve the balance, the National Wildlife Federation has acquired more than 2,000 acres in California, Illinois, Wisconsin and South Dakota just to keep eagle-dozers away from the endangered bald eagle.

Help save a place for wildlife. Write Department 503, National Wildlife Federation, 1412 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Save A Place For Wildlife.



LETTERS

Continued

The real mission of *Desert* magazine is to help its readers enjoy and appreciate the desert, but also help them to realize their obligation to conserve it and protect it for this and future generations. As Randall Henderson said in a 1957 editorial, "It is good for one's humility to become familiar with the ecology of this earth on which we live—the fine balance which Nature preserves when left to her resources—and the penalty we humans pay when we discard as useless every plant and animal which does not appear to contribute to our immediate gain." This is the real mission of *Desert* magazine—to see that there will al-

ways be a desert left for us desert folk to love and enjoy.

Steven Singer
Santa Cruz, CA

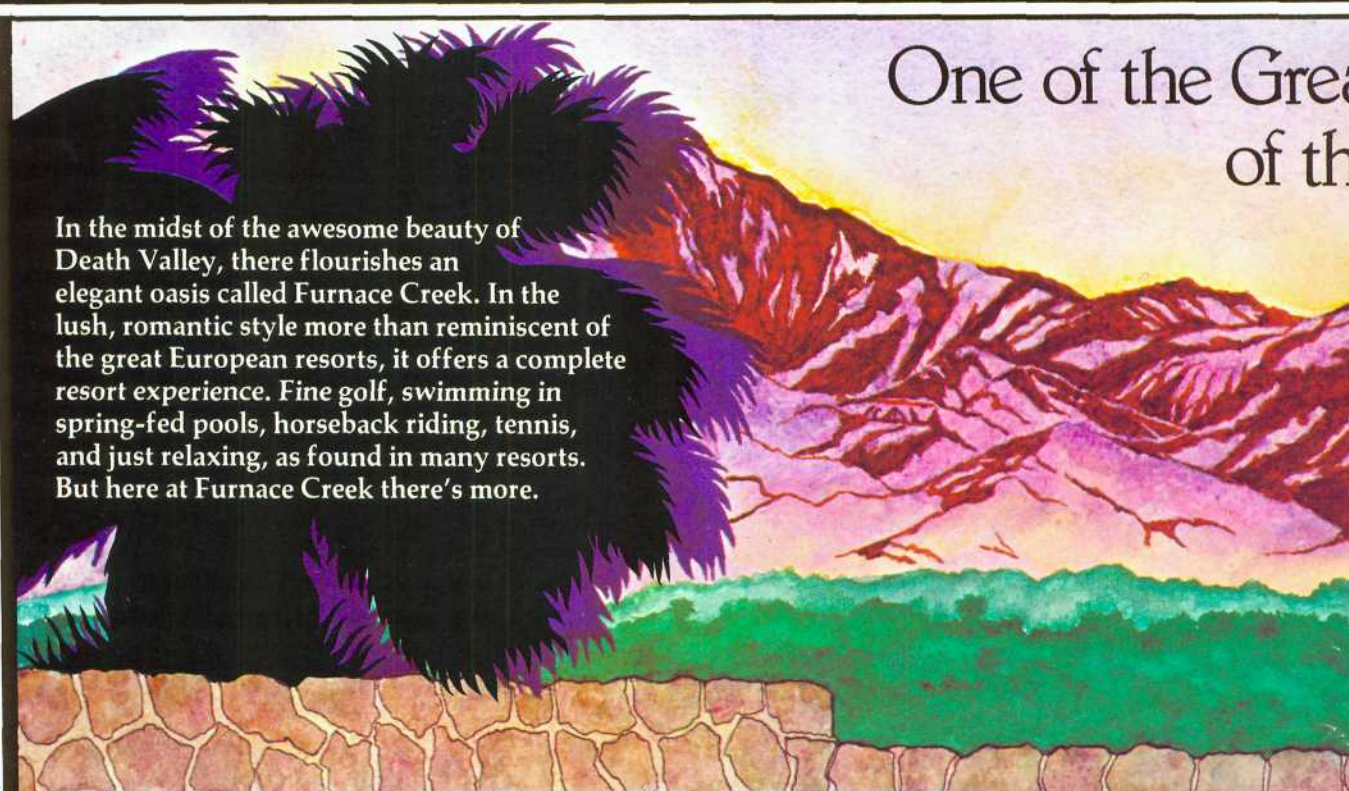
The "real mission" of *Desert* magazine is to serve as a forum for those who are willing to speak the truth of their experiences. The "real mission" of *Desert* magazine is *not* to moralize and make a lot of judgments about who is right or wrong. Our mission, and mine as editor, is to facilitate the telling of the truth. If you have the guts to write it, I have the guts to print it. It is the *Desert*

reader's mission, partly through our magazine, to, as you put it, "see that there will always be a desert left for us desert folk to love and enjoy."

Looking For An Answer

I have read your magazine for years, and my only regret is that I won't have time to take all of the trips that you describe.

I am interested in the Inyo Marble Company which had a quarry in Inyo County, I believe near Keeler. Would any of your readers be able to help me with information about the history of this company and its operations?



In the midst of the awesome beauty of Death Valley, there flourishes an elegant oasis called Furnace Creek. In the lush, romantic style more than reminiscent of the great European resorts, it offers a complete resort experience. Fine golf, swimming in spring-fed pools, horseback riding, tennis, and just relaxing, as found in many resorts. But here at Furnace Creek there's more.

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Thank you for any help that you can give me.

*Tom Macaulay
Reno, NV*

Don't Just "Do It"

In the July '81 issue, there was a letter from Mary Crago, a frustrated Hoosier, wondering how she could travel in the desert since her husband died. I think your answer, "Do it," left a little to be desired. If she just went to the desert, not into it; if she stayed on the main roads, that might be alright, but some innocent turn

might take her onto a road that desert people avoid.

To go into the desert, one should have some pretty specific knowledge of equipment and how to repair it. How to dig roads and dig out. One should know when to let air out of tires, and how much, and one should be able to reinflate those tires.

To go into the desert, one should have the ability to walk 25 miles in a day, and one should know when not to walk.

Perhaps when Mary and her husband traveled in the desert, they did not have all of the knowledge and skills that are required. Still, I don't think

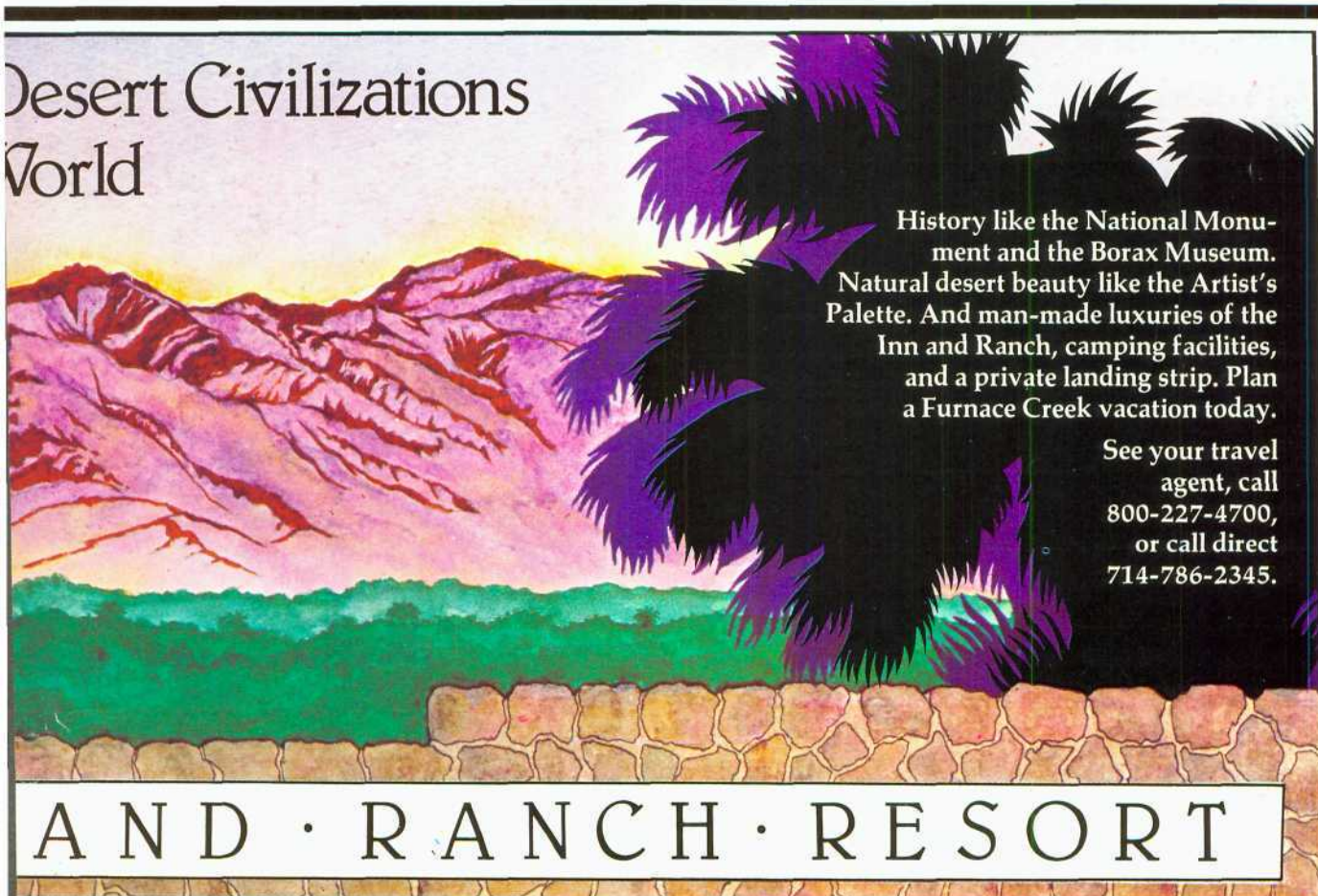
we want to send anyone into the desert solo without some desert driving skills. I think a party of four is an optimum party. When the party becomes a party of four with two vehicles, that becomes a super party.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had the ability to get people like Mary together with people who do drive into the desert?

*Harry Johnson
Davis, CA*

Thank you very much for your interest and concern. The response to Mary Crago was admittedly flip-pant and irresponsible.

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THE LIVING DESERT

by Susan Durr Nix

The Sun Worshippers

The red racer rode in the bottom of a well-ventilated, industrial-sized mayonnaise jar; a cumbersome container with too exotic a tenant for me to carry, along with an armload of books, into the library. The snake stayed in the car, in the shade, with the windows rolled down for a brief 10 minutes, and died.

It was hot inside the car, certainly too hot for a dog but not, one would think, for a species often seen abroad when most other desert animals are curled inside burrows or sequestered under bushes or rocks. How did it happen so fast? I've since learned that the sun-loving reptiles are among the most vulnerable to overheating of all animals. They must work continuously to maintain a delicate balance between life-giving warmth and heat prostration.

The behavior I interpreted as a hit or miss exchange of heat and cold within a broad range of tolerance—sun-bathing, burrowing, running on tiptoe, streaking from bush to bush—was in fact careful management of sun and shade to maintain a particular optimum temperature. A reptile's optimum, or preferred, body temperature is only five or six degrees lower than its lethal maximum. This is why the snake died so quickly. Detaining a reptile just a few minutes too long in the heat amounts to cold-blooded murder.

"Cold-blooded" is a peculiar term for animals whose blood is often warmer than that of other vertebrates. The desert iguana, for example, reputedly the most heat-tolerant of all lizards, withstands temperatures up to 115 degrees Fahrenheit. The term cold-blooded is used to differentiate animals who do not generate their own internal heat, from the "warm bloods" who do. It is usually associated with the reptiles: snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodilians and the



Karen Sausman

An adult short-horned lizard basking in his sun ritual.

tuatara. A more accurate word for those who depend on environmental heat is ectothermic.

Although the ectotherms could not exist without the sun, they participate, to a surprising degree, in their own thermal regulation, by behavioral and physiological adjustments. Some of these involve complex manipulations of the blood, the body's main heat conductor. A cold chuckwalla basks on a rock to reach his optimum temperature of 97 degrees Fahrenheit. A torpid lizard is unable to feed or protect itself, so the faster it warms up, the better. The chuckwalla exposes as much blood as possible to the sunlight by flushing it into the fine network of capillaries immediately beneath his skin.

A sluggish fringe-toed lizard keeps its body buried while it exposes its head to the sun. Using a muscular tourniquet unique to reptiles, the lizard pinches the veins in its neck so that blood pools in its head and heats before it returns to the body. Another lizard, the "horney toad," can route warmed blood past the usual set of

veins to an alternate set, so that its heat doesn't diffuse prematurely. So far as is known, this refinement is its alone.

Similar blood control techniques are used by lizards to repel, retain or release heat; others have no thermoregulatory function. When lizards shed their tails to escape predators, the vessels constrict automatically to staunch the flow and cut short the tell-tale trail of blood. Those without a self-amputating tail use other protective devices. The horned lizard meets stress by closing a valve in his jugular vein until his head is completely engorged with blood and his eyes bulge. A weak spot in the lower eyelid ruptures, squirting a fine stream of blood and fluid that repels some predators, especially dogs and coyotes. All reptiles, including the horned lizard, use this "swell mechanism" to get shedding underway. Enlarging the head loosens the skin so it can be rubbed off more easily.

Color is another heat control device. The internal body cavities of many reptiles are lined with a black mem-


brane that apparently screens out ultra-violet light. Scaly skin is highly reflective, as are the lighter white or sand-colored reptile skins. Dark colors absorb heat and dissipate it faster in the shade. This is an aid to darker rock-dwelling lizards who retreat into crannies at midday. Some lizards do not change color voluntarily, as is commonly thought, but largely in response to temperature, light, state of health and level of excitement. Geckos and iguanids, in particular, tend to be darker at low temperatures and lighter at high temperatures. Night lizards reverse this tendency, presumably because they ordinarily need to warm up more than they need to cool down.

The shape of a reptile's body and the way it's manipulated to increase or reduce exposure to the sun are also important temperature regulators. Long thin snakes heat up faster than fat stumpy lizards, and their critical maximum temperatures are usually lower. This is one reason why desert snakes tend to be nocturnal and desert lizards diurnal.

The flat-bodied horned lizard, with half of his surface exposed to the sun and half of it facing the ground, gains heat through his broad back but can lose it by exposing his belly to cool sub-surface sand. These lizards typically position themselves according to how much solar radiation they wish to receive: the cooler the day, the more body area exposed to the sun. These positions include full-bask, half-bask, shade, partial-burial and full-burial. If need be, the horned lizard can compress his body into a more tubular shape. Since large bodies warm more slowly than small ones, the onset of cold weather sends most adult reptiles into hibernation. They can't absorb heat quickly enough to function well. Smaller-bodied young, however, continue to be active for some time. The maximum size of desert reptiles is probably limited by this heating factor. Tortoises are our largest ectotherms.

Perhaps the most bizarre, and least understood, heat regulator is the third, or parietal, eye located in the center of the forehead of some lizards, including the desert fringe-toed and side-

blotched lizards and their cousin, the tuatara of New Zealand. It is not a true organ of vision, although it has an iris, a pupil and is connected by nerves to the brain. It may be the vestige of a real eye, known on some dinosaur ancestors of present-day reptiles, but its function nowadays has something to do with the assimilation of light. The third eye appears to help regulate daily and seasonal exposure to the sun. If it is removed or masked, lizards become dangerously careless about their basking rituals. This eye is also said to help these animals adjust their reproductive cycles during periods of climatic fluctuation.

There is no doubt that the existence of reptiles through the ages is closely tied to the sun. The mobility necessary to feed and find mates and to escape predation is derived from the sun. The reptile respiratory and circulatory systems can't carry enough oxygen to meet their energy requirements, nor are these animals capable of generating enough heat through exercise to replace what is lost through their skin. The sun is an active evolutionary force, and insures that the fittest will survive. To paraphrase Dr. Raymond Cowles, all things being equal, the warmest animal gets the food and wins the girl. Temperature affects temperament: the warmer the reptile, the more aggressive; the more aggressive, the more dominant. Aggressive males more successfully defend their territory from intruders. Dominant males may have more reproductive success. The daily warm-up is a mandatory rite for these sun worshippers. 

Susan Durr Nix is Development Coordinator at the Living Desert Reserve, a 1,000-acre desert interpretation and conservation facility in Palm Desert, California. She shares her

enthusiasm for the natural world not only in articles and publications, but in educational programs for visitors to the reserve.

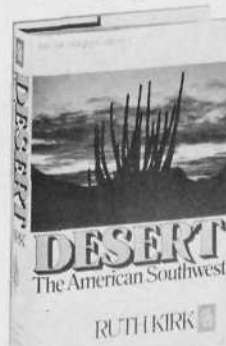


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CHUCK WAGON COOKIN'

by Stella Hughes

Chocolate Christmas with the Hopi

In 1943 my husband, Mack and myself, along with our two small children lived at Oraibi, a pueblo village on the Hopi Indian Reservation in northern Arizona. Mack was a Range Rider with the Department of Interior. We lived in a government house at the base of a sandstone cliff at the edge of the village.

This was war time and food was rationed, as was gasoline. It was 80 miles of mostly dirt roads to the nearest town along the railroad. Rarely did we make this trip more than once a month, but when we did the stores always seemed to be "fresh out" of luxuries—candy being one of them. Oh, we could buy war candy, but it was awful, filled with grain cereals—or was it sawdust?

The owner of the trading post near our house went to town every Wednesday, to obtain supplies from a wholesale grocer. Sometimes he was able to buy several cartons of real Hershey bars, Baby Ruths, Almond Joys, and Milky Ways. When the hour approached for the trader's return, a long "candy line" formed just outside the store.

The situation was handled in a very democratic manner, the candy was sold strictly "first come, first served." There was a limit of five candy bars per person, no matter whether you were chief of the tribe or just chief dishwasher at the government day-school. I usually sent our five-year-old son, Skeeter Bill, with his quarter in hand, to stand in line.

There was never any problem until the Skeeter failed to return from the store after I saw the trader's truck unloading its cargo. I'd watched Hopi children passing our house happily munching on candy bars; still no

Thom Vollenweider



Liz McDonald, our Associate Art Director, tries her hand at the Chocolate Christmas Candies.

Skeeter. Finally, exasperated, I went to the store and asked if they'd seen the "little cowboy," as they called Skeeter. Ah, yes, he'd been seen there, but had gone to so-and-so's house which was pointed out to me, perched on the side of the mesa.

When I did find Skeeter, he had a following of Hopi boys, but not a sign of any candy. I towed Skeeter home by his hand and questioned him along the

way. Just what had become of his candy?

"I shared it with my frens," Skeeter said.

His generosity was commendable, but I was burned up because I felt sure he'd had none for himself, as his "frens" were twice his size. I berated him for not coming home right away.

"I wouldn't care if you'd just gotten some," I complained as we walked

along the dusty road.

"I did, I did," Skeeter assured me, and when I looked doubtful, he opened his mouth wide and taking a grubby finger he pulled his lips as far as flesh will stretch. I could see signs of chocolate and bits of nuts still clinging to his molars. Defeated, I had to laugh.

As Christmas approached I had little faith that our trader would be able to supply the demand for holiday goodies. I sent off a large order to Sears Roebuck. From past experiences, I knew half the items shown in the catalog would be unavailable, but I trustfully marked each item "substitute with whatever you have." Desperately, I marked dress goods and linens "any color will do, just send *something*."

From the skimpy pages of candy offerings, I ordered some of everything pictured. I mailed the order with crossed fingers—darned little good it did me. When the packages arrived there was no candy of any kind.

During November I'd made extra money for Christmas by baking cookies and cupcakes, which I sold to the trading post. I'd used almost all my sugar ration stamps and had none to make candy for Christmas. Unless there was a modern day miracle, we'd have little sweets during the holidays.

The Hopis are a religious people and their lives center around their centuries-old religion. Most participate in their many seasonal ceremonies. Skeeter became a steady visitor to the kiva, where the Hopi priests stayed, and in one year's time he could speak Hopi. The kiva was so close to our house, I could hear the drums and chanting through the night. Often I had to send someone in to dig Skeeter out, so he could come home to bed.

Corn is a focal point in Hopi religion and is used in every ceremony. Almost every day Skeeter came home with some kind of edible made of corn. Usually he brought *piki*, a tissue-thin cornbread that is unique to the Hopi culture and served as crackers, often eaten with soup or stew. Another tidbit Skeeter relished was a sweet cornbread

he called *somevike*, which was steamed in corn husks and eaten hot with meat or beans. Once, when attending a party (uninvited, I'm sure), he returned with a crescent-shaped, blue cornmeal roll, wrapped in corn husks, which he called *chukyviki*. Later I found this is served at wedding ceremonies only.

Hopi ceremonies for the public were held in the plaza just beyond the store. I wasn't surprised, when two days before Christmas, I saw a great many people gathering there. Trucks full of people were parking everywhere. Even horse-drawn wagons, loaded to the sideboards with oldsters and children, rattled off the mesa from Old Oraibi and stopped at the store. Skeeter began begging to attend, and when I gave him permission, he left, riding his stick horse on a dead run.

Soon I heard the squawking sounds of a loudspeaker and then a recording of "Silent Night" began to play. This was something I'd have to see for myself. I dressed the baby for the cold weather and went to investigate. Well, I found no regular Hopi ceremony, but instead a huge Christmas party sponsored by a missionary group from Gallup. They spared nothing in presenting treats for everybody.

I watched the missionaries hand out candy canes, gum drops, boxes of Cracker Jacks, packages of gum, oranges, apples and sacks of peanuts. There were even toys, some new. There were boxes of used clothing and I saw warm coats, heavy jackets, woolen sweaters and stocking caps handed out to eager recipients. Another truck held hundreds of loaves of bakery bread, boxes of crackers, cases of canned tomatoes, bags of flour, and sacks of beans and rice. All was distributed in an orderly manner while recordings of Christmas carols played over the microphone.

Skeeter ran up to me, his arms full of candy and fruit. He returned to get bags of candy for his baby sister. After listening to numerous speeches I returned home with enough candy to last the holidays. Glory be!

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- 1 cup butter or margarine
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- 2 cups flaked coconut
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 package (6 oz.) semi-sweet chocolate pieces
- 1 piece (2½-inch size) paraffin wax, cut up

Combine butter and peanut butter in two-quart saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until melted. Remove from heat. Combine graham cracker crumbs, confectioner's sugar, coconut and walnuts in a bowl. Pour peanut butter mixture over all; toss until blended. Shape mixture into ½-inch balls. Place on waxed paper-lined baking sheets. Cover with aluminum foil. Chill in refrigerator. Combine chocolate pieces and paraffin wax in top of double boiler. Place over hot water; stir until melted. Dip balls in chocolate. Place on waxed paper-lined baking sheets. Let stand until chocolate is set. Cover with aluminum foil and store in refrigerator. Makes two pounds or about eight dozen.

"It just doesn't seem like Christmas!" The following poem was the answer to a service man, celebrating his first Christmas on a desert.

A Desert Christmas

Snow for Christmas, Eastern friend
When Palestine had none?
Judea's stars were close and soft
Where God sent down His Son.
Bethlehem had gentle hills
Like those you saw today.
Through a velvet night like this
The wise men found their way.
Do you think the angels sang
Through Christmas trees and snow?
Hear the anthems stir the palms
Tonight as long ago.

Author Unknown 

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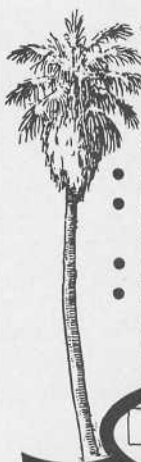
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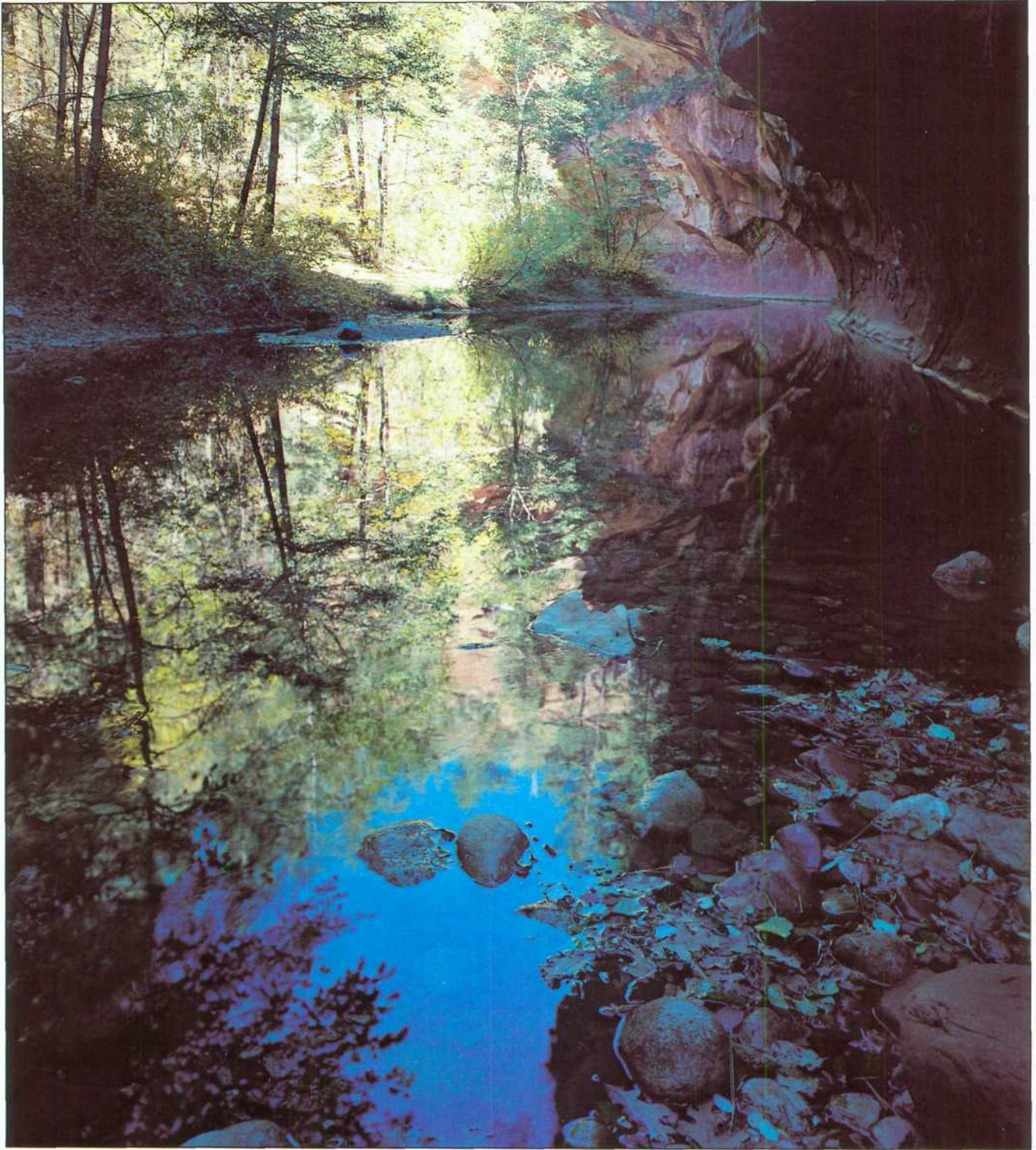
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Stella Hughes has written articles for many western magazines, and is a regular contributor to Desert magazine. She lives 46 miles from Clifton, Arizona, near Eagle Creek. She learned how to camp-cook many years ago, out of self-defense. Many of her experiences have been related in her book, *Chuck Wagon Cookin'*.



TRACES IN THE SAND

Jerry Sieve



The mirror-like west fork of Oak Creek Canyon near Sedona, Arizona.

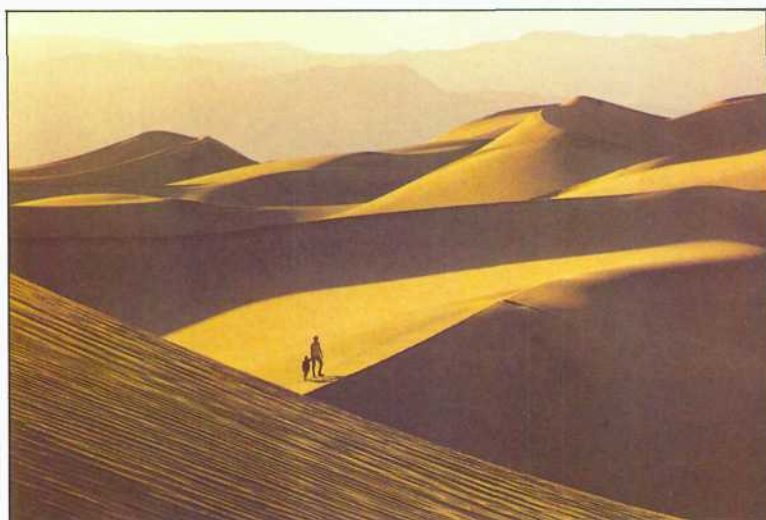
Overture

Wallace Stegner

All I knew was that it was pure delight to be where the land lifted in peaks and plunged in canyons, and to sniff air, thin, spray-cooled, full of pine and spruce smells, and to be so close-seeming to the improbable indigo sky. I gave my heart to the mountains the minute I stood beside this river with its spray in my face and watched it thunder into foam, smooth to green glass over sunken rocks, shatter to foam again. I was fascinated by how it sped by and yet was always there; its roar shook both the earth and me.

Excerpted from *The Sound of Mountain Water*, by Wallace Stegner, © 1980 by Wallace Stegner, published by E.P. Dutton.

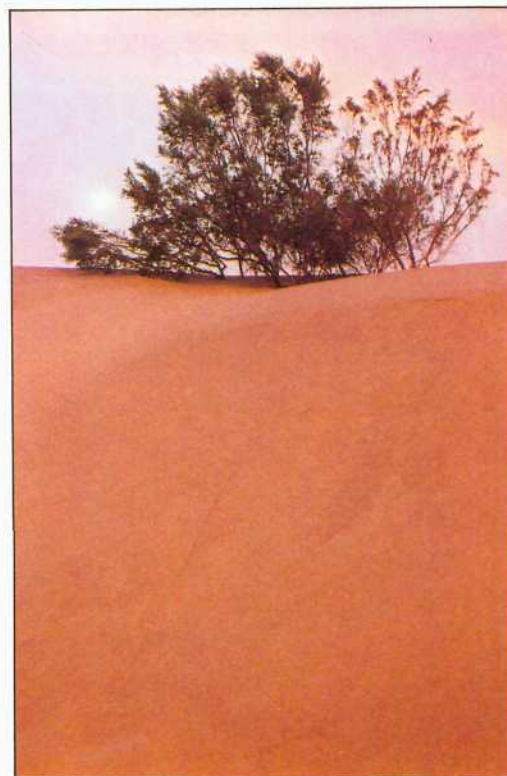
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A. Light and shade contrast in the Mesquite flat dunes of Death Valley National Monument in California.—David Muench



B. An ocotillo blooms with the Kofa Mountains of Arizona in the background. David Muench



C. A creosote bush witnesses the dawn, with the moon setting, over the dunes at Death Valley National Monument in California.—Jeff Gnass

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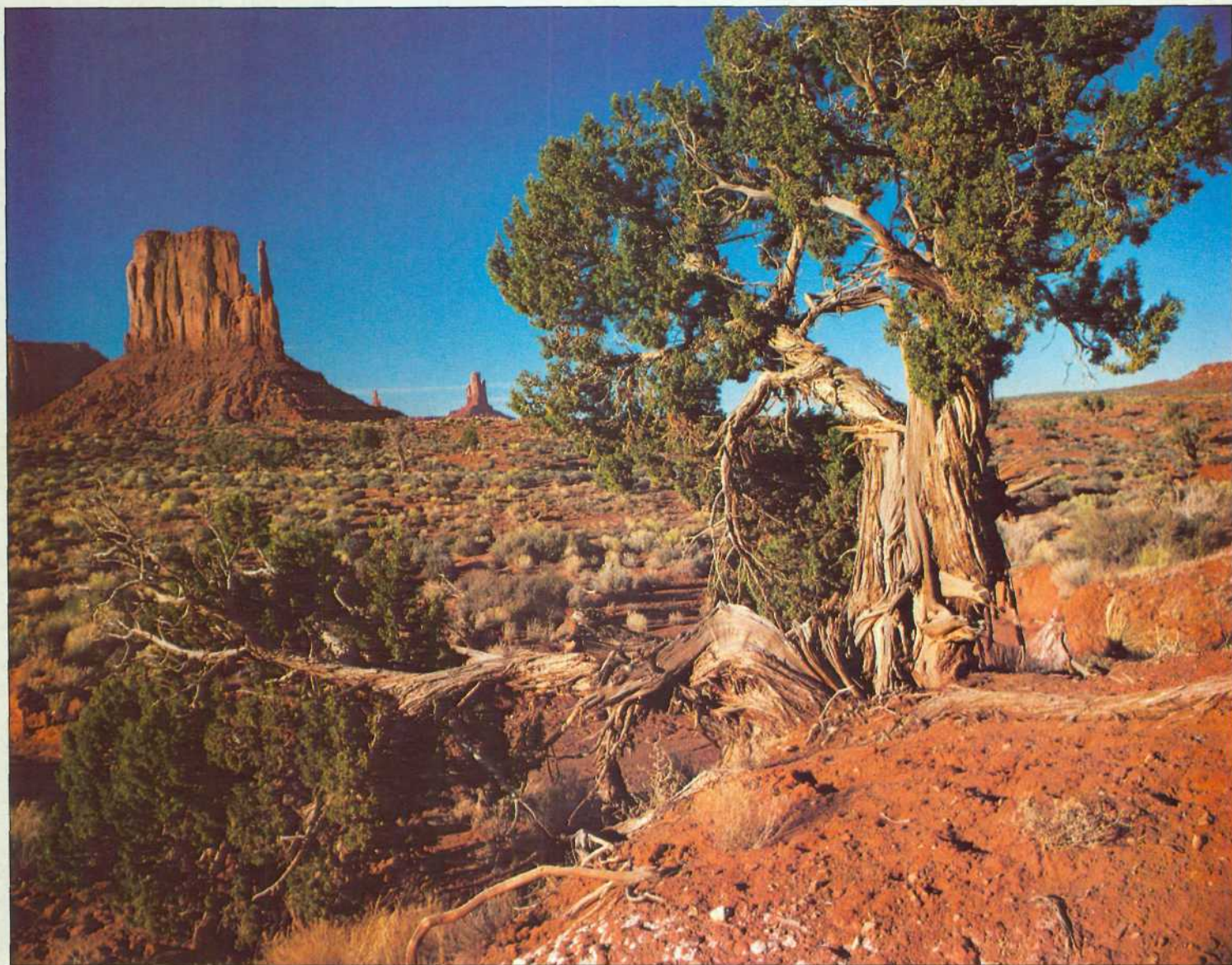
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The Desert Mystique of Joseph Wood Krutch



An Appreciation.

Text and Photography by Andrew Steuer III

The late Joseph Wood Krutch wrote about nature in a personal and interpretive style. He made it clear that he saw the natural world from the viewpoint of a participant, not from that of a spectator. In his book, *The Voice of the Desert*, he devotes each of the first 11 chapters to a different facet of desert life. He touches on the desert in general, desert weather, the saguaro, mountains, the kangaroo rat and so on. In chapter 12, he bridges the gap between the merely factual and the more abstract considerations of values and personal philosophy by arguing for the cause of a land ethic, an idea first put forward by Aldo Leopold. In the 13th and final chapter, Krutch deals completely with the abstract and speculative realm in a discussion of what he calls "The Mystique of the Desert," a term that serves as the title of this chapter. I thought it was the perfect conclusion for a humanistic interpretive work on the desert. I also felt that it provided me with some insight into my own attachment to the desert.

Just before Christmas two years ago, my Aunt Jane called and invited me to spend a few days at her home in San Diego during the holidays. I had enough free time to drive the 420 miles from my home in Tucson, Arizona, spend a couple of days with her, and make the return trip; so I was glad to

The desert mystique, from Monument Valley near the Arizona-Utah border.



The eloquent Joseph Wood Krutch.

accept the offer.

The night before I left for San Diego, I had to drop a friend off at the airport and I didn't get home and in bed until 2 a.m. I was up at 5 a.m., so

The mystique of the
desert is the most
powerful of any—its
voice, the most profound
of all.

I could get an early start on the long drive ahead. At the same time, I noticed I was coming down with the flu. By the time I hit the road in the pre-dawn darkness, I was feeling pretty lousy. I broke for lunch at a fast food place in Yuma, 240 miles down the road and tried to regain my strength with a couple of cheeseburgers. Feeling only slightly better, I set out again, crossing the Colorado River into California and heading west through the great Algodones Dunes. Somewhere out on the creosote bush flats, west of El Centro, the flu and the fatigue began catching up with me. Fortunately, relief was in sight. The line of blue mountains stretching across the horizon dead ahead marked the end of the Imperial Valley and the great eastern escarpment of the Jacumba Mountains.

This leg of the trip was always my favorite. The sight of the Jacumbas capped with winter storm clouds lifted my spirits. The Jacumba Mountains are part of the Penninsular Range which crosses the nearby international border into Baja California. From the base of the mountains, the highway switchbacks up the steep slopes which look like tremendous piles of huge boulders. They should have named these mountains "the Rockies." Growing among the boulders are many beautiful desert plants in a natural rock garden setting. Two plants which I found most striking were the golden California barrel cactus and a large agave—both plants

were abundant and conspicuous in the area. The beauty of the desert plants amid these spectacularly rugged mountains created an inspiring scene. At a point where the highway crosses a bridge spanning a plunging canyon, I pulled over to admire the view.

By this time, I had driven for seven hours and had covered 350 miles; all that on three hours of sleep and with the flu bug along for the ride. I had lots of film, plenty of great scenery and an interesting canyon right by the highway. On the other hand, I was bone tired and feeling feverish; I had no canteen and the last 70 miles were still ahead. Naturally, I decided to go hiking.

What I found as the natural thing to do was not necessarily the logical course of action. But for me, the magnetism of the desert often transcends logic. The lure of the desert wilderness, the promise of things to be revealed around the next bend in the canyon, the call of the remote sierra, blue and jagged across the barren flats, all these exert a pull on those who love the desert. A part of the desert's attraction becomes visible through the work of the photographers who have found their main inspiration here, this includes me. In their visual record, others may gain some measure of the clarity of light in the desert, the sweeping landforms and the depth and spaciousness of the arid frontier. Other special qualities of the desert emerge through the medium of the printed word, and although circumstance has placed the offices of *Desert* magazine two blocks from the Pacific, the spell of the desert reaches into Stephen Simpson's office as surely as it reaches into my home in Arizona. For me, this magnetism, power or whatever we choose to call it, finds its best definition in the phrase coined by Joseph Wood Krutch: the mystique of the desert.

Krutch's use of the term mystique is an effort to go beyond observable fact and move into the realm of morals, values and personal philosophy. The adoption of such an aesthetic sense toward nature redeems the universe from deadness in Krutch's view. Ideally, our personal knowledge should progress beyond scientific facts to embrace emotional involvement with the natural world. He sees the mystique of things as a fuller understanding of the universe rather than one that is simply a rational but detached viewpoint based upon cold, hard facts.

Mystique also implies a heightened awareness, a keener sense of the per-

vative reality of which we are a part. It's an assertion that we are not discontinuous with the rest of creation, somehow separate and above it all: instead we are part of the whole of nature. Any of us who feel the mystique of the desert, or that of the sea, the woods or any special place, would agree with Krutch's belief that this sense of kinship with nature, this affirmation of our place in the scheme of things, is a source of joy and comfort.

Ideally, our personal
knowledge should progress
beyond facts to embrace
emotional involvement
with the natural world.

Krutch then narrows his focus of the mystique of nature to consider the desert specifically. He views the desert as a land at the limit of nature, an uncompromising wilderness governed by elemental forces. The awesome and dramatic aspect of this empty land has inspired great thinking, giving rise to intellectual movements ranging from the major religions to the science of astronomy. Krutch considers the deserts of the American Southwest as our last frontier. The concept of frontier has always been a major factor in shaping the American character. The desert is our last frontier not only because it is the latest scene we have arrived upon, but also in the sense that it is a frontier we can never push back. More hospitable regions have yielded to our advance, but the desert remains unconquered. In short, the desert is a place of powerful influence. Krutch argues that the mystique of the desert is the most powerful of any region, and the voice spoken by the desert the most profound above all others.

To those who have heard the voice of the desert, the idea of the desert mystique can be readily grasped. What Joseph Wood Krutch has put forth is a written expression and personal definition of something already known intuitively by people who love the desert. His eloquent testimony to the power and magnetism of this land speaks for us all. He's been gone for over a decade now, but the legacy of his immortal writings remain to inspire future readers. Krutch would be happy to know that, to his admirers, he and his work have become a part of the

very mystique of which he wrote so well.

Krutch lived in Tucson for the latter part of his life, not far from where I live now. I'm sure we've hiked some of the same canyons, maybe gazed across the same vistas and perhaps stood atop the same mountains. I'll never know if he made it to my canyon out in the Jacumbas, but he would have enjoyed it if he had. From where I stopped during my hike along the canyon rim, I could see the vast flats stretching into the Anza-Borrego preserve. I thought about the remote palm oases lost in that immense space. I thought about the ranges reaching southward entering into the deserts of Baja California, serving as my link with that strange land of the boojum and cardon below the borderline. Another imagination captured by the mystique of the desert.

It was time for me to push on to San Diego, so I started back toward the highway across the boulder-strewn terrain. Groups of big agaves crowded the rock shelves while golden barrels poked out of every crevice. The huge round boulders seemed randomly tumbled all over the place; some fractured, one even split cleanly down the middle. I climbed carefully down the loose rock face out to the highway. I still had an hour's drive to go, sick and beat as I was. I knew that once I got something to eat and a decent night's rest, I'd be able to shake the bug and the fatigue. After all, it wasn't anything incurable. What was incurable, though, was the spell of the desert mystique, but I'd just had a dose of the best medicine.

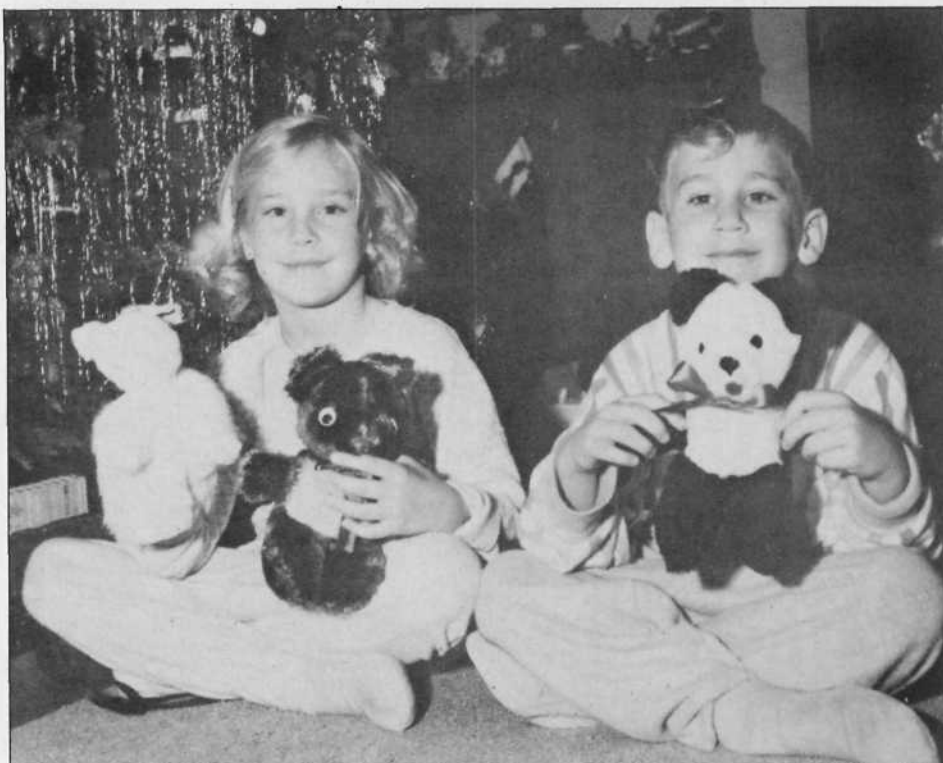


Andrew Steuer III received a B.A. in Psychology from LaSalle College in 1973. His parents gave him a 35mm camera as a graduation present, and he's been pursuing a career in photography ever since. As an outdoor photographer and wildlife painter, he concentrates mainly on the Southwest. He and his wife, Diane, live in Tucson, Arizona.



Joseph Wood Krutch is the author of 21 books. In addition to *The Voice of the Desert*, some of his titles are *The Modern Temper*, *Samuel Johnson*, *Henry David Thoreau*, *The Twelve Seasons*, *The Desert Year*, *The Best of Two Worlds* and *More Lives Than One*.

A gentle and very personal look back through time and miles.



Chris and Ricky as they were on that memorable Christmas in the desert.

Desert Christmas

By Chris Goebel

I had never seen snow before. That was perfectly understandable, because I had lived in Phoenix all my life and frankly, had no desire to see snow. I loved the warm desert winters, particularly at Christmas. But now, here I was, working for a company 2,000 miles from the desert, in the middle of a Wisconsin snowstorm. If that wasn't bad enough, it was Christmas.

I swirled my glass of eggnog in lazy circles and gazed out the window. There was probably four feet of snow on the ground, and it looked as though there could easily be another four feet by morning.

The lights on my little Christmas tree blinked happily, and as I stared into the pine branches, the room around me faded. Suddenly I was 10 years old and back in my family's living room.

My tenth Christmas was a special one in many ways. That was the year I learned that Christmas could be cold, and that some places even got snow. Because I grew up in the desert, I assumed every place had holiday seasons like ours: ones that were brown and green and smelled like pine and cactus.

That year I learned otherwise, and it made me double-glad I lived in the desert. Pa always said we had four seasons like every other place, but ours

were different: We had spring, summer and fall and Christmas. He said the desert never got a winter, at least not a cold one, so it didn't count as a season. My younger brother, Ricky, and I believed him. It was more fun having a Christmas season than a winter anyway.

Ricky and I always knew when the holidays were coming because Mama and Pa would start talking in whispers and giggling like little kids. They always quit when we walked into the room, and tried to look like they were reading or watching television. But we knew better.

As Christmas got closer, Mama spread stacks of cards on the kitchen table to send to her friends. She'd mutter because she had so many to write, but when I asked why she did it, she'd only laugh and hug me.

Now, 2,000 miles from that table, I only have to close my eyes and I'm back in her warm kitchen, impatiently waiting for the batch of chocolate chip cookies to bake, watching her fill the

cards with her funny, squiggly writing. The pictures on cards that year were of cactuses—saguaros, barrels and chollas. Mama said it was because we lived in the desert, and since not everyone knew what a special place it was, it was our duty to show 'em.

She bought the cards after trying to take pictures of the family to send out. A month before Christmas she made us get dressed up—Pa even had to wear a tie—and made us pose in front of our cactus garden. On one, Ricky made a face because I pinched him; on another, the camera was crooked and only half of Pa was in the picture. Ricky and I punched each other the whole time, and Pa swore it was the last time he'd pose for a family portrait. From now on, I remember him saying, as he pulled cholla needles out of his arm, Mama could buy her Christmas cards at the store.

After that Christmas, my memories run like a home movie through my head. On December 20th (I remember the date because it was the day we got out of school), Pa took Ricky and me to get our Christmas tree. I was a warm evening, and the air was tangy from the dozens of trees propped against the fence. Ricky and I argued about which was the biggest and prettiest, but we finally decided on a full, majestic fir. When we got home, Pa grumbled because he had to cut

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some off the top to make it fit in the living room. He had to do that every year though, so Ricky and I just laughed.

Finally, Pa got out the ornaments, and we all helped decorate. The house smelled like pine and like the fruitcake Mama was baking. She brought us big steaming mugs of hot chocolate—to give us energy, she said.

Seeing the ornaments after a whole year was like seeing old friends again. My favorite decorations were the little red elves and the pipe-cleaner saguaros I made in my crafts class three years before. I hung them carefully while Pa untangled the tinsel he saved from the previous year. He said it was a crime to throw away perfectly good tinsel. I guess he was right, because now I do the same thing with mine.

Ricky and I tried to hang the shiny, slightly crumpled silver strands one piece at a time, like Pa, but there was so much tree, we'd have been at it forever. When no one was looking, we threw it on in big handfuls. Once Mama caught us and tried to look mad, but her eyes crinkled up like they did when she laughed, and we knew it was okay.

We lived in the desert, and
since not everyone knew
what a special place it was,
it was our duty to
show 'em.

Even though decorating was fun, I think the part of Christmas that year that stands out the most in my mind was Christmas Eve. Mama and Pa took us around Phoenix to see the decorations. Ricky and I looked at Rudolphs and Santas, Marys and Josephs, lights of every possible color, and a special decoration Pa called luminarios. He explained that they're a desert decoration, made from sand, candles and paper bags—just like the kind I carried my lunch to school in. With normal 10-year-old logic, I decided he was wrong; luminarios were magic, sort of like overgrown fireflies. That night, we went to a hotel that had thousands of the magic lights: They were set all around the sidewalks, buildings, cactuses, and even the swimming pool's diving board.

We stood a long time in the cool desert night, watching the softly glowing firefly-lights. After a while,

when I looked around, the lights had spread into the sky and into everyone's eyes.

I noticed something else—the way everything smelled. There was a good desert smell; kind of sweet, but it liked to bite back. Mama said it was the palo verde trees, but I knew it was another part of Christmas.

We all stood there, smelling the air and wishing Christmas would never end, when someone started singing "Silent Night." I knew the words to that one, so I sang along, and then "Away In a Manger," too. But when they started singing "First Noel," I just listened. The song and the lights were so pretty my arms got goose-bumpy and my throat ached, like the time it did when my hamster had died a year before.

Then Mama and Pa took Ricky and me by the hands and we piled back in the car to go home and wait for Santa. Pa took the long way home so we could look at more lights, and Ricky, even though he was almost eight, fell asleep in my lap.

But it was okay. Pa carried him to bed and Mama guided me to mine, since it was hard for me to see clearly by then. They kissed us and tucked us in. Since I was still awake, Pa sat on my bed and told me about Christmas. It's for children, he said, brushing my hair back from my face. I can still see the faraway look in his eyes and the soft smile on his face as he talked about the baby, born a long time ago in a desert just like the one we lived in. That little boy, Pa said, was born in a manger surrounded by animals, and was the reason we have a Christmas. He grew up and died for all of us, so every year we celebrate his birthday, and what he meant to the world.

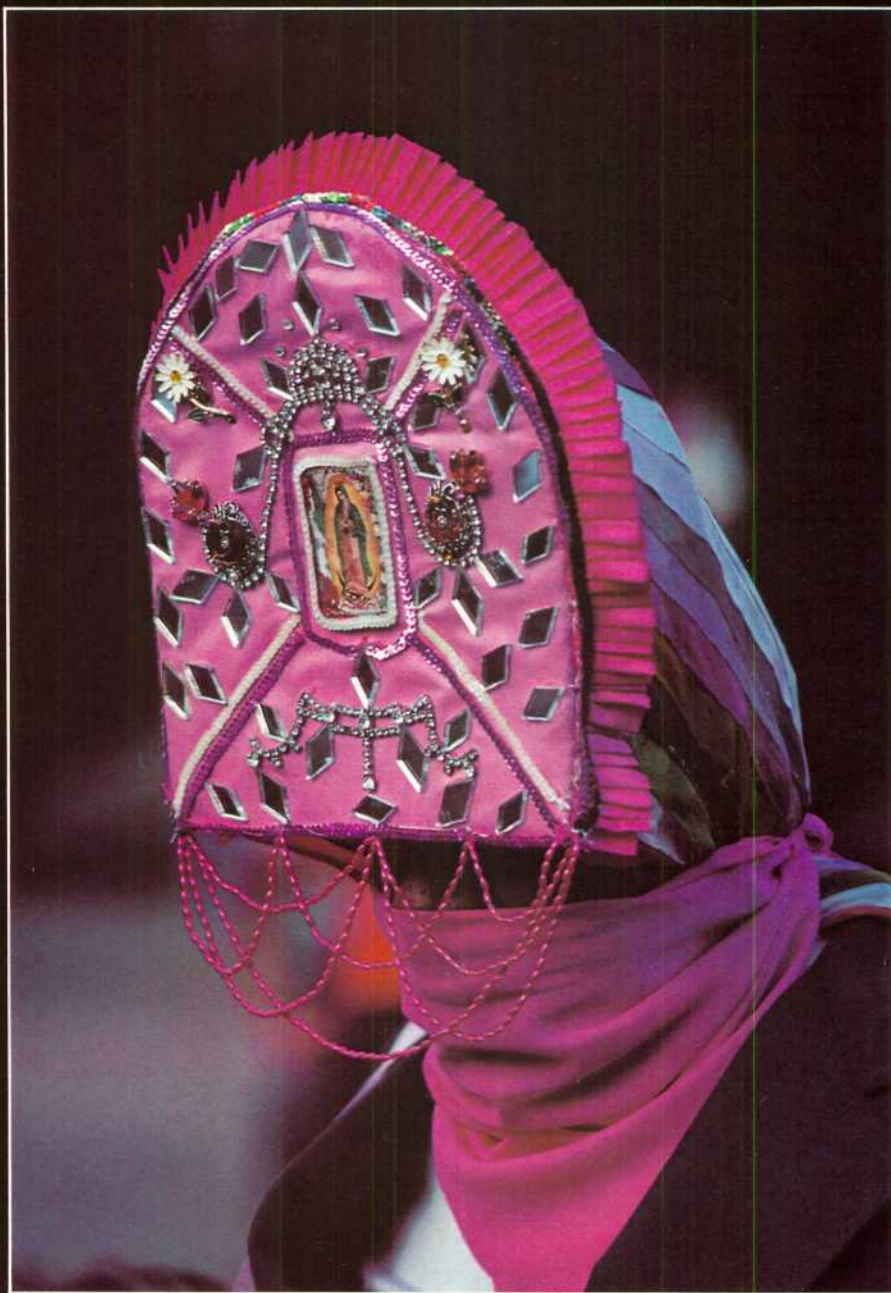
It was the prettiest story I had ever heard, and I began to see an eight-pointed star above a manger and a baby in the desert. As the baby's Mama smiled and bent over to kiss him, Pa did the same to me. I heard him, way off in the distance, say, Christmas is for children. And that he loved me. **D**

Chris Goebel lived in Phoenix for 22 years before moving to Wisconsin and Texas to write for a major conglomerate and one of its subsidiaries. She has since moved back to the Southwest, and is now working as a freelance writer.



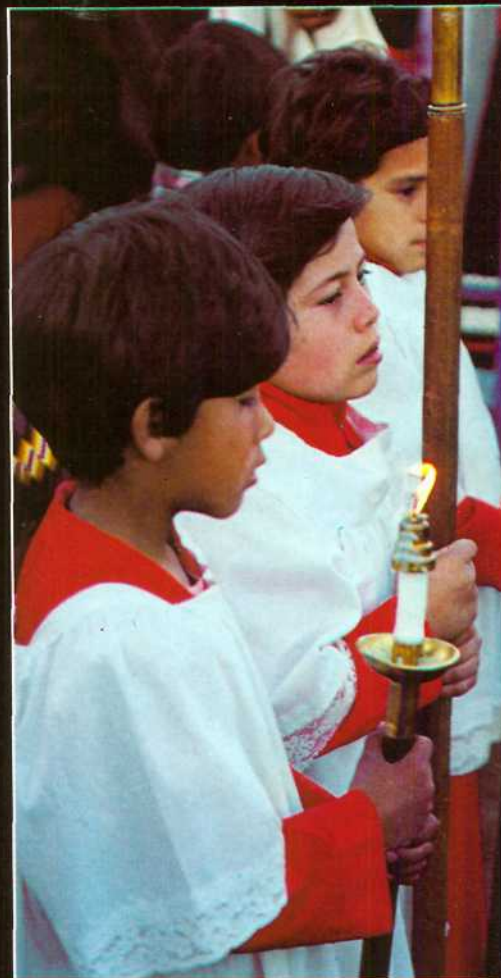
Feast for the Soul

The celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe



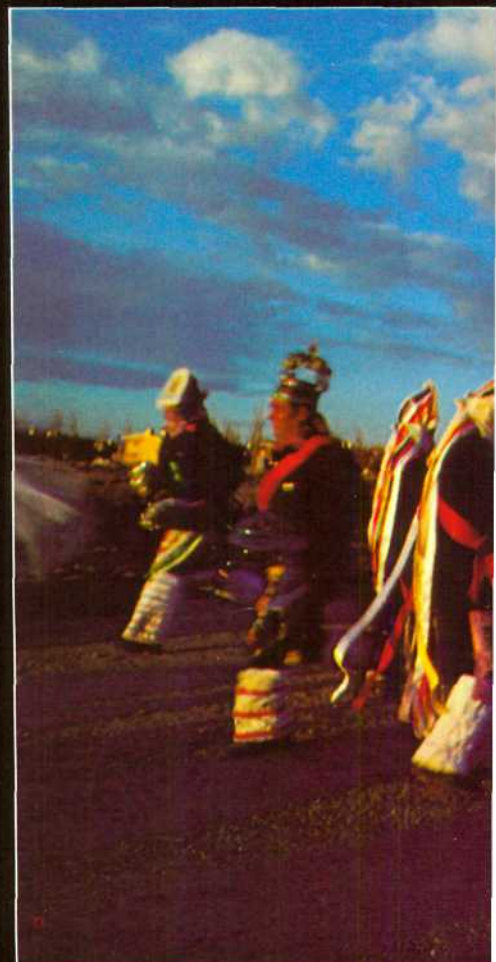
Text and Photography by Pamela and Russell Bamert

Preceding page: *One member of Los Danzantes. Top, from left: Altar boys in the procession. The image of La Virgen Morena is worn by dancers. Azteca dancers perform. Below: More members of Los Danzantes.*

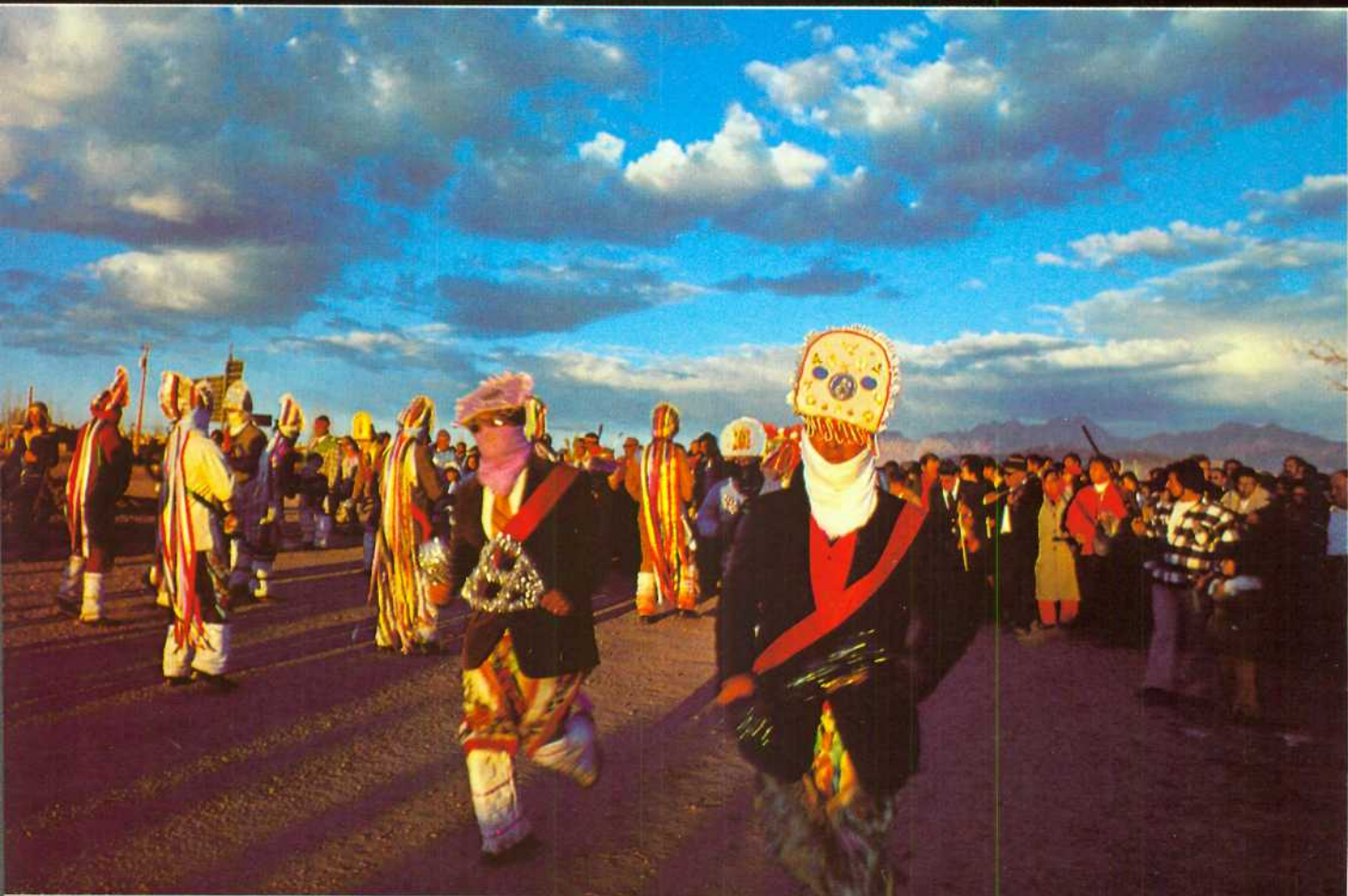
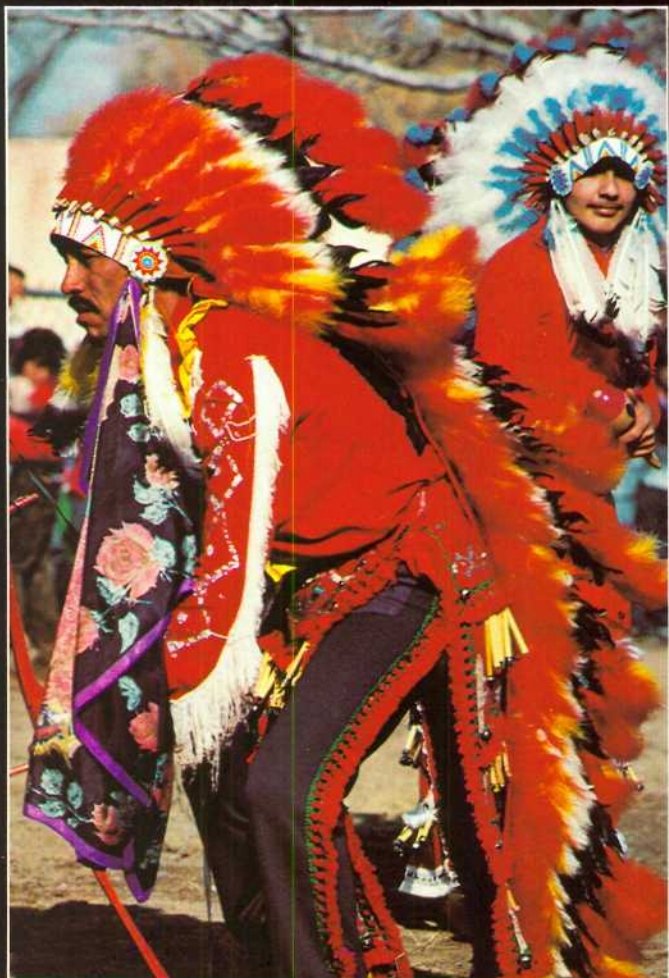


We watch the sun vanish behind the mesa to the West. The low clouds, threatening snow, change from gold, to pink, to a deep rose that takes a long time to fade. It is as if the brilliant sunset signals the important event which is about to begin and which we are here to witness.

Tigua Indians from the village of Guadalupe, nicknamed and commonly known as Tortugas, will initiate their sacred, three-day Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the same manner that their ancestors taught them. The traditions of this community, located just south of Las Cruces, New Mexico, have never been recorded, but the music, dances and ceremonies continue to be passed down from one generation to the next.



Continued on page 35



The Loss of the Shaman



When the last shaman died, we lost 10,000 years
of oral tradition, beauty and an understanding of the spirits.

Text by Peter Aleshire

Ruby Modesto died more than a year ago—the last pul or shaman*—but Cahuilla tradition calls for the ceremony to be held a year after the death, after which the name of the deceased is never again mentioned.

David Modesto has held the final ceremony for his wife of the Torres Martinez Band of Mission Indians. The mourning ceremony for his wife of 40 years was performed by singers and dancers from Arizona. Many of the

intricate songs and ceremonies, cherished for 10,000 years by the desert Cahuilla, died with his wife.

He's invoking her name now, however, to preserve whatever fragments of his ancient culture that he can. Modesto has spent his 63 years in hard, physical labor on the desert farms of the Coachella Valley, driving tractors and harvesting crops. His dignified humility and gentle fatalism belie his determination. He harbors no illusions that he can stand against a century-long tide, but he is doing what he can to fill the void left by the death of the last member of his band to claim the healing and visionary powers of a pul.

Modesto is teaching a federally-funded class in the Cahuilla language to 10 children who are among the 200 residents of the 24,000-acre reserva-

tion at the north end of the Salton Sea. He teaches pottery classes and talks to magazine writers, but does not know the ancient songs which died with his wife. He also lays no claim to the powers of a pul, which animated his wife's long life, and to which he was a respectful bystander.

Modesto nourishes the hope that someone else will develop the powers of a pul. It is only necessary for a man or woman to dream the dreams of a pul in order to acquire the connection to the spirit world, which the Indians believe pervades all things.

"Puls are born, not taught," says Modesto. He scans the young people of the band and the dwindling ranks of his language classes, hoping to find someone with that indefinable "differentness" which sets a pul apart.

In the meantime, he watches the in-

*Shaman—a priest or medicine man of the religions based on the doctrine that the workings of good and evil spirits can be influenced only by the shaman (priest).

evitable fading of his culture and its ancient world view with a curious detachment. He speaks with a calm resignation of the buffeting two of his three children have undergone.

"These things happen and you have to go along with it, because how can you fight it? If you sit and think about it, pretty soon the only thing you've got is hatred built up in you and you're not going ahead. You're mad all the time.

"Ruby and I tried to follow our traditions as closely as we could. As long as you're doing something, why should you be sad?"

But he also understands how much has been lost.

The language class, for instance, has dwindled to a third of its past peak enrollment. "Their ears are somewhere else. Pop music, I guess. I'd like to see some of the younger people take an interest, bring the culture back."

He remembers, though, that he was not much different in his own youth. "I wish you could have talked to my grandmother," he says. "I never asked the questions I wish now I could answer. I was always too flighty, always on the go. I was a hard-headed guy. You never could tell me anything."

He's determined to do what he can now, motivated by his loyalty to Ruby, his sense of her presence, and his own dawning knowledge of how wispy the old ways of thinking have become.

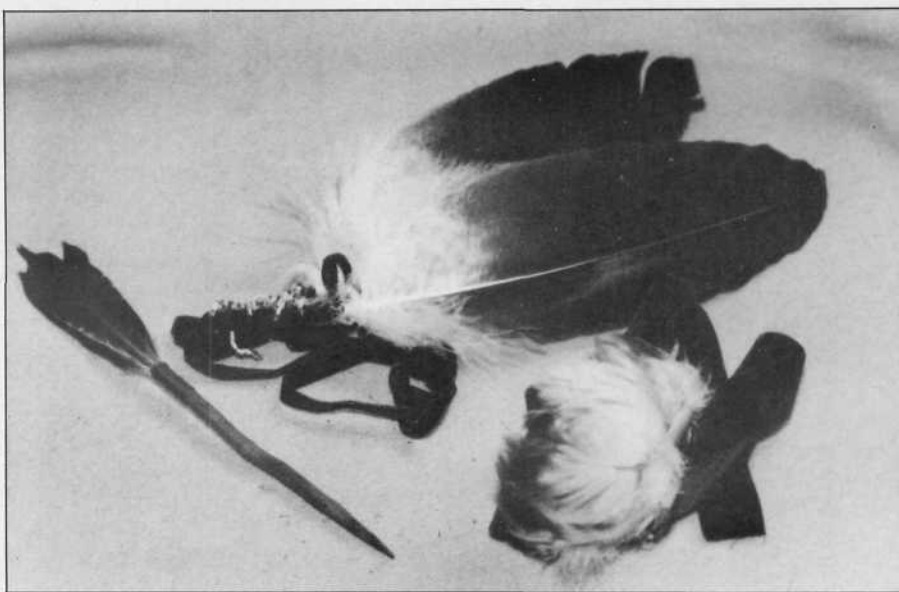
"White people get out, and say this and that, to make us think just like the white man, but I want to keep the Indian way going too.

"I have to do it now. In another generation, there will be no one to learn from."

"In our religion, everything has a spirit. Even the rocks have a spirit. As a child, I could see things in rocks. I could see human forms and animals like the lizard."

Ruby Modesto

So when Modesto held the traditional mourning ceremony a year after his wife's death, he tried to hold it in the old way. He had to import ceremonial dancers and singers from a tribe in Arizona, because the songs which developed over 10,000 years have died with the last few people who



Ruby Modesto (left), the last of the Cahuilla shamans, used ritual feathers and wand (above) as part of her healing implements.

knew them. With those deaths, vestiges of a uniquely different world view have nearly slipped into extinction.

Fragments of that view were recorded by researcher Guy Mount, who spent months with Ruby Modesto before she died. He recorded some of what she said in his book, *Not for Innocent Ears*, published shortly after she died. In that book, Ruby speaks for herself and for the ghostly pul which once dreamed the dreams of an entire people.

"Students come out from the university to see how the (healing) plants are used. They write it down. But when we say the most important part," she told Mount, "they smile and turn away. The real truth is that plants have a spirit, too. In our religion, everything has a spirit. Even the rocks have a spirit. As a child, I could see things in rocks. I could see human forms and animals, like the lizard.

"Sometimes I showed the forms to people and after a while they could see them, too. But people from the university don't believe these things. They themselves don't know how to see and have lost touch with their own religion and the spirit forces of the earth.

"It is too bad and I feel sorry for them. They are lost men and their own spirits are starved," said the last pul.

Few Anglos can understand a pul's healing, she said. "It is important that these kinds of healings are not attended by people with wrong ideas. The pul shouldn't let white people watch these things, because they can't see what's really happening. It's okay to be skeptical, that's not what I mean. I'm

pretty skeptical myself.

"But you can't have people around who are just laughing, or challenging the pul or testing everything. You want people who are open-minded and trusting. You don't fool around with spiritual things. If a white man were at the healings, all he would see is a funny Indian blowing smoke on his hand and waving feathers in the air. But like I say, very few white people know how to see or are willing to learn. It's too bad because I think our ways are true, and the healing method could be used to help many people."

Ruby acquired the pul's vision in a manner followed by uncounted generations. A pul's power comes through dreaming, often aided by powerful hallucinogens made from the jimson weed and the elephant tree. Puls were often noted as being "different" at an early age, and the differentness was watched and often protected.

When a potential pul was 16 or 18 years old, he or she would often go off into the desert wilderness to find some quiet place, in which to seek their vision.

Ruby told Mount she dreamed to 14 levels to acquire the pul's powers. She passed from one level to another by forcing herself to lie down and fall asleep in the dream, waking in the next level.

The first time, she lost her way in the dream, and lay in a coma for three days. Eventually, her uncle, a pul who specialized in finding lost souls, entered into her dream to guide her back. By that time, she had also encountered her spirit guide, an eagle, who would give her a pul's powers and remain her guide for the rest of her life.

The Indians believe these guides are the first creatures which populate the Cahuilla mythology.

The Indian mythology resembles the all too human world of the Greek gods, rather than the monotheistic division between good and evil which underlies the Christian faith. The Indian gods are flawed. They're filled with cunning, courage, jealousy, rebellion and wisdom.

The spirit guides of pul share that complexity. Some guides, like frogs, invariably use their human charges to work evil. Others, like the birds of prey, are dangerous and unpredictable, working either great harm or great good. Still, others, like vultures, can draw out sickness without being hurt, as their real-life counterparts can feed on rotted meat. Puls generally have specialties. Some control the wind, some heal snake bites, some bring back lost souls.

Puls lived in most of the scattered bands which claimed vast stretches of desert, their territory centered around infrequent waterholes. Inherited songs provided a detailed oral map of each water source for hundreds of square miles of desolate land.

The Anglos dismiss pul, for the most part, as the figureheads of superstitious, unscientific peoples. But the historical record contains perplexing hints of their powers.

For instance, several Anglo observers have watched Indians handle live coals, or even swallow them, without apparent harm. Nina Shumway watched one such performance just after the turn of the century in the Coachella Valley. She recorded the experience in her book, *Your Desert and Mine*:

Ambrosio Castillo, a pul, showed up at a fiesta which had drawn bands from the entire area.

"He was of medium height," she recalls, "stalwart in stature, dressed in ordinary blue denim pants and cotton shirt, his head bare. Under a mop of raven hair, the liquid shine of his black eyes was veiled by a remoteness of thought that left them blank and mysterious. His face, very dark and strong-featured, with a great scar cutting down one cheek, had a rapt immobility which suggested a consciousness lost in some supersensual transport."

The Indians gathered around the fire and began a deep, vibrant chanting, almost a hum, while Ambrosio stood rigid, swaying slightly. The monotonous rhythm of the eerie chants and the motion of dancers around the campfire clamped the crowd in silence.

"Suddenly Ambrosio opened his eyes, stooped, picked a great glowing coal from the fire, and put it in his mouth. He stood for

several moments, eyes shut, mouth wide open, the burning ember on his tongue. Then he closed his jaws. A noticeable quiver passed through his body. He swallowed convulsively, opened his mouth and the coal was gone."

Ambrosio repeated the procedure several times, as the chanting continued without pause.

"He stood for several moments, eyes shut, mouth wide open, the burning ember on his tongue. Then he closed his jaws. A noticeable quiver passed through his body. He swallowed convulsively, opened his mouth and the coal was gone."

Nina Shumway

"Then he stood like a totem while the movements of the Indians drifted into immobility. The humming and wailing and beat of the rattles ebbed into awesome stillness. In silence, the circle broke up and Ambrosio, descendant of an ancient priesthood, walked quietly away alone into the night."

Another unexplained incident is reported by Harry James, in his book *The Cahuillas*. Traditionally, some pul could assume animal forms. A posse near Banning, before the turn of the century, was amazed to find that the tracks of a pul they were following seem to turn into bear tracks. The tracking dogs became frantic when the trail changed, and the anxious posse followed the tracks until they once again appeared to assume human form. Following the tracks, they eventually found him, napping under a bush.

A pul's apparent telepathy was recorded by journalist Ed Ainsworth, who wrote *The Golden Checkerboard*, detailing the efforts of the Agua Caliente Indians to gain control of their tribal land in Palm Springs.

Lawrence Crossly, a Palm Springs' pioneer, told Ainsworth of the incident which involved Chief Patencio, the last chief of the Agua Calientes and a powerful pul.

The two men were sitting quietly on Patencio's porch, when the chief arose suddenly, saying "he needs me." The curious Crossly followed wordlessly as Patencio gathered a few supplies and

headed unerringly up the canyon to the rugged slopes of Mount San Jacinto. They hiked for hours up the mountain, plunging into the thick matting of manzanita below the timberline. At last, Patencio turned aside to where a rock rose like an island in the sea of underbrush. There he found a member of the tribe who had fallen and broken his leg.

Carobeth Laird, an anthropologist who married a Chemehuevi Indian, wrote in her book *The Chemehuevi* that the messengers which linked the dispersed desert tribes were said to travel by teleportation. She records an incident in which a group of skeptical whites followed the footprints of one messenger across a sand dune, only to find the tracks disappear mid-stride.

The Indians themselves took the powers of a pul so seriously it could be dangerous to be one. If three of the shaman's patients died, he could be put to death. In other cases, bands joined together to kill pul thought to be malevolent.

William Duncan Strong, in his landmark book *Aboriginal Societies of Southern California*, recorded several reports of such drastic action.

Julian Norte, one of Strong's chief informants, told Strong his grandfather had been a great pul who could catch bullets in his hands, but who bewitched many people, causing them to die. The bands of the lower Coachella Valley talked the matter over and decided to send another pul, Morvi, to kill the evil shaman. Morvi crept up behind the offending pul and struck him with a digging stick. When that was unsuccessful, others joined in, piling rocks on top of him until he died.

In another incident, Tcivato was a powerful pul whose cures often proved fatal, and whose critics tended to sicken and die.

Again, the many bands in the Coachella Valley were consulted, and a brave was dispatched to eliminate Tcivato. He went to visit Tcivato, then crushed his skull with a rock as he slept—treachery was acceptable in dealing with an evil pul. The next day, people from all the bands gathered to burn Tcivato's body and his house. The united clans then warned the angry members of Tcivato's band that they would be wiped out if they sought to avenge his death.

The pul's powers were critical to many aspects of the life of the desert Indians.

For instance, Jim Rice, a Cahuilla Indian, once told naturalist Paul

Wilhelm of the pivotal role pul's played in the warfare of the desert tribes. He described a Cahuilla victory over the warlike Yumans who were making a foray from their strongholds along the Colorado River.

"My people won that decisive battle with the Yumans many years ago, because the Yumans had no time to fast and prepare," Rice told Wilhelm.

"From the moment signals were seen on high ridges, all the men of my tribe had two days to fast, taking nothing but water, and concentrating on some spiritual truth. By that time, they sensed that the enemy was near.

"Then the leader sent out a single scout. The scout climbed a ridge. He saw nothing, but he knew by feeling that the enemy lay concealed behind rocks on the next ridge—as if he were able to see though the hills before him and the rocks which hid the enemy. This truth came to the scout because he was on a high spiritual plane.

"The scout reported back to the leader, who was on an even higher spiritual plane. After the scout left him, the leader knew exactly what to do. 'Divide into two groups,' he told his warriors. 'One group go down the canyon, through the pass into the next valley and behind the next ridge. Attack toward the rocks on the side of the ridge when I signal. The second group do likewise, but to the north.'"

The leader then directed the battle by "remote control," giving the signal for attack when he felt the time was right.

"He held the thought and proper prayer that the enemy arrows go wild. He used every resource of ancient lore to protect his warriors," Rice said.

"This is how my people won battles with marauding bands," Rice continued. "We were called fierce and barbaric. It was not that. It was because we knew these old secrets. And," he added, "the spirit who was beyond the ancient lore insisted, through our medicine men, that a warrior must also help himself. No matter how far along this spiritual path a man had gone, some arrows got through. The Great Spirit was not expected to bend down and turn those arrows. It was up to the warrior to anticipate, and step away, from the position where the arrow was aimed. Those high in the secret lore could turn the arrows at the moment they left the enemy's bow."

Such accounts bolstering a pul's claims to special powers are scattered, lacking the solid evidence needed to sway the scientific mind. By the time

trained observers began to study the desert tribes, the culture had been completely altered by long contact with Europeans.

In addition, some claims, together with unscientific explanations, strain credulity.

For instance, Ruby told Mount that epilepsy was caused by a demon,

"The desert Indians were a visionary people.

Visualization was as important to them as science is to us. . .

Dreaming worked and probably had a higher success rate for them than logical thinking."

Guy Mount

Tookisyl, whose power was derived from a sexual desire for a forbidden person. The traditional cure was to urinate on a person having a seizure, which shames them into stopping. She hedged, however, by noting that some seizures are caused by brain damage.

She also told Mount that she found what appeared to be an ant hill in which a whirlwind lived. She said she would sometimes poke into the hole with a twig, just to rile the whirlwind, then stand laughing as it gusted angrily out of its hole and raised dust all about her.

Her husband swears he saw it happen.

For Mount, the evidence was impossible to discount. From his first meeting, he could not shake the feeling he was dealing with something beyond his understanding.

In the end, he concluded, "the desert Indians were a visionary people. Visualization was as important to them as science is to us. The Datura and elephant tree are among the world's most potent hallucinogens. Controlled dreaming was also very important.

"Dreaming worked," Mount wrote, "and probably had a higher success rate for them than logical thinking."

The loss of that intuitive sense may be the chief cause to mourn the passing of the last few pul's among the Indian tribes. Already, no one among the Cahuillas, Serranos or Chemehuevi claims the pul's status. The elders of

the tribes can only cite rumors of pul's, or potential pul's, in Arizona or in the Rincon band near San Diego.

Pul's were the focus for the whole visionary world view of the desert Indians. That philosophy held that all things are interrelated, that thought is as real as matter, that everything shares a common spirit. Only now are physicists, astronomers and geneticists pushing into the intuitive, visionary world of the pul's, taking the scientific route to perplexing conclusions which would ring familiar to a pul.

"Science," says Mount, "may be ready to make use of the visionary methods of the Indians as it reveals the cellular connection of things, as the Indians postulated the spiritual connection."


For instance, geneticists have begun to uncoil the double helix DNA which provides the genetic blueprint of all living things. They have found the genetic code for a tree and for a person differ hardly at all. The business of living cells is overwhelmingly similar, whether they are encased in bark or heart tissue.

The universe is seen as a single system, expanding and contracting in a breath spanning eons of eons.

It is, finally, not so very different from a pul's notion that each thing in the world has its proper role, and affects all other things.

It is too late now for science to ask the right question of visionary pul's. Whatever response they might have made has faded into the silence of improvised mourning ceremonies.

Ruby Modesto, at least, left fragments in interviews. Like her husband, it's unlikely Ruby would be bitter about that.

"On the other side of this life is 'That Place' we go after death," she told Mount. "It is beautiful. That horse I used to ride as a girl will meet me. Best of all, I will get to speak to Umna'ah, whom I've prayed to all these years." 

Peter Aleshire is opinion page editor of the Contra Costa Times. He was formerly the managing editor of the Indio Daily News. He was raised in the Coachella Valley where he acquired a lifelong interest in the desert.

Photos courtesy of Guy Mount. To order a copy of the book, Not for Innocent Ears, by Guy Mount, contact Sweetlight Books, 600 F Street, Arcata, CA 95521 (707) 826-0187.

Some thoughts on our spiritual homes.

CHURCHES

There is a world of difference between the adobe of the old church at Chimayo and the concrete of the Chapel of The Holy Cross near Sedona. The forest of spires at Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, is, if you will pardon a sort of contradiction, equally unique. What they have in common is that they are all churches, places of God, and they are all in the Southwest. When thinking of the churches of the Southwest, the word hallowed comes to mind first. It is close to both halo and hollow, and what these words imply.

They are our homes, more so than our houses will ever be; places of sanctuary and respite; where no anger will cast us out or bar the door. When we are away from home they still welcome us. They are the stage for some of the deep and lasting moments of our lives: baptism, marriage, death. They are the connection, place and symbol of the mystery that is our lives. We have made them this way—and so we try to make them strong and solid (in our minds at least, regardless of the realities of time and weather and the decay of materials). These are the physical foundations of our spiritual lives. Since

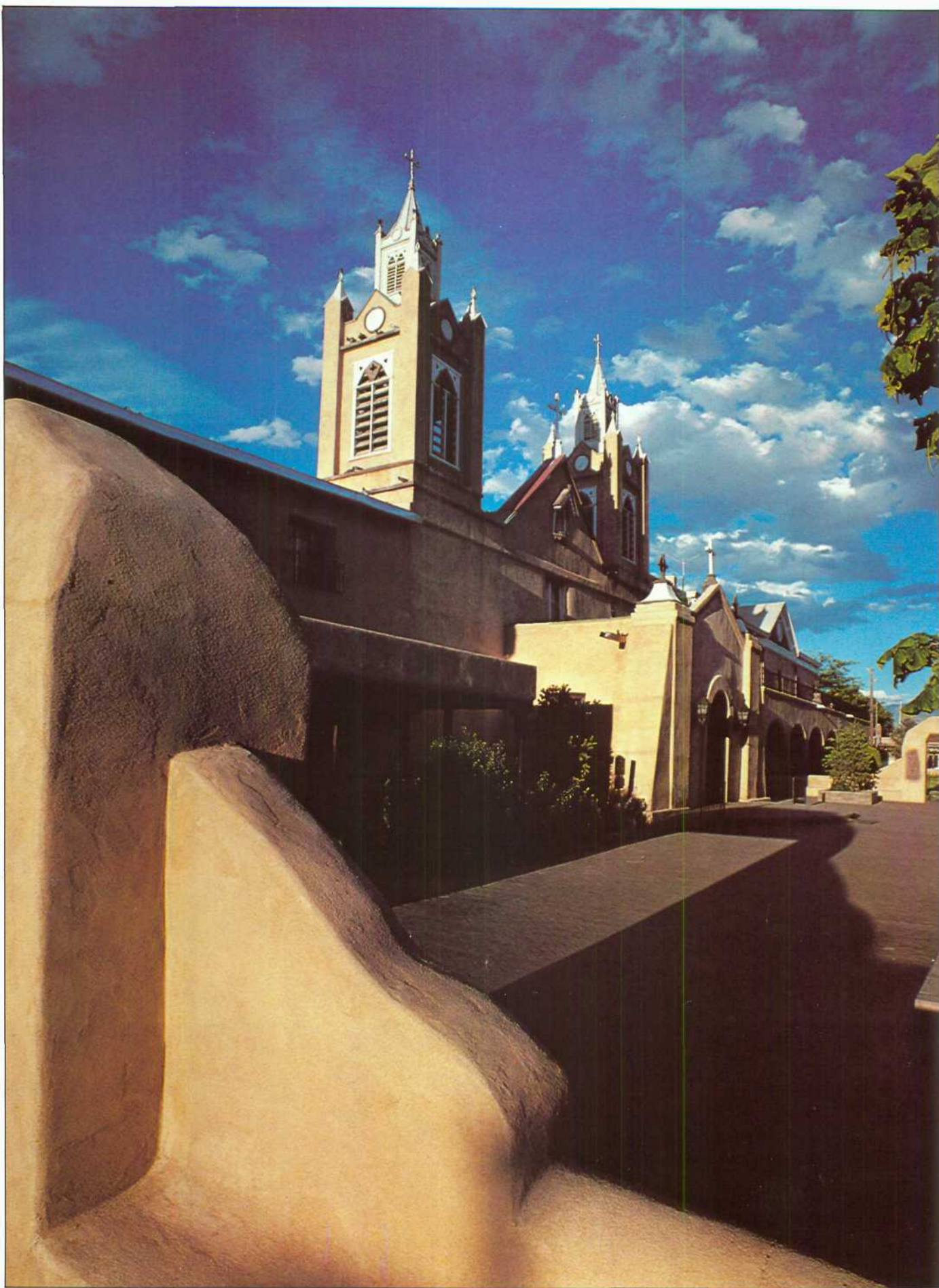
we believe that the soul will stand forever, we build the house of the soul to stand forever. Most of them seem to have been here since long before we arrived. Look at those in our communities. Most of them are older than our memories.

They are art too; wondrous studies in texture, line and color, designed to exalt the spirit rather than comfort the body. They are all steps and walls and high ceilings and rows of benches. The floors are hard and cool and the windows always bright.

Most, though not all, of the churches in the Southwest have crosses, evidence of the Christian influence. Most, though not all, are old. Their roots are in the history of these lands and the lands that built them. They would be perfect subject matter for the anthropological/historical/social histories of James Michener—the dust and adobe and the dark and dirty faces that built them.

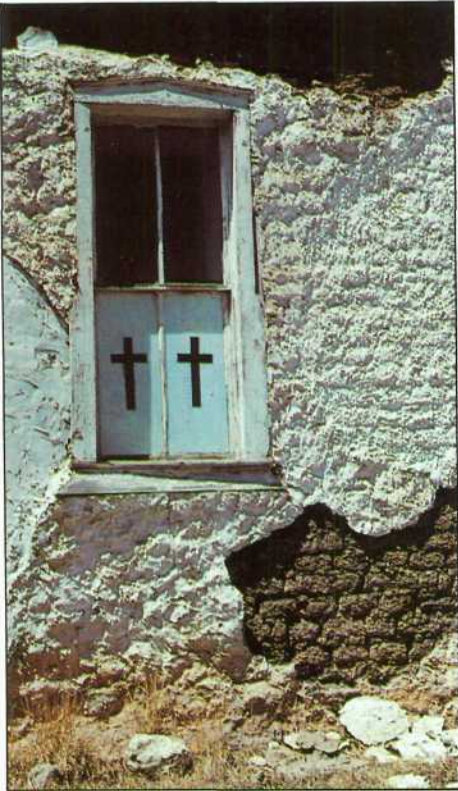
We offer the few shown here as testimony to the beauty of the Southwest. We have a combined religious and architectural heritage to match any in the world. May you find peace and pride in this.

by Stephen Simpson

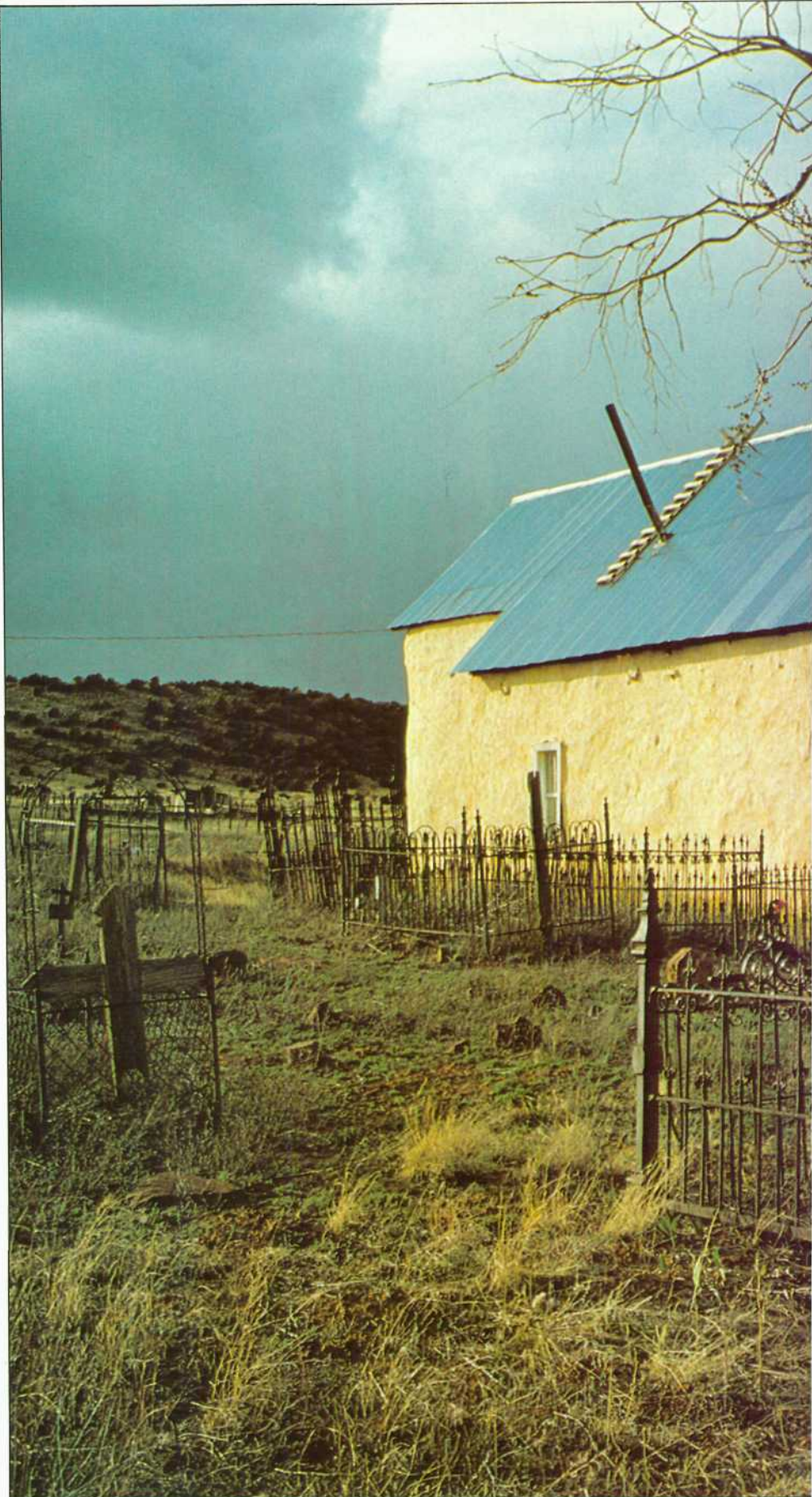


San Felipe de Neri Church in Old Town, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

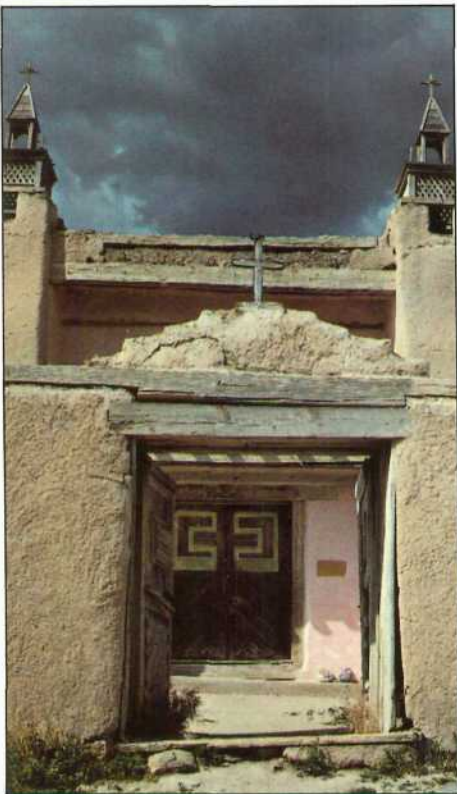
Willard Clay



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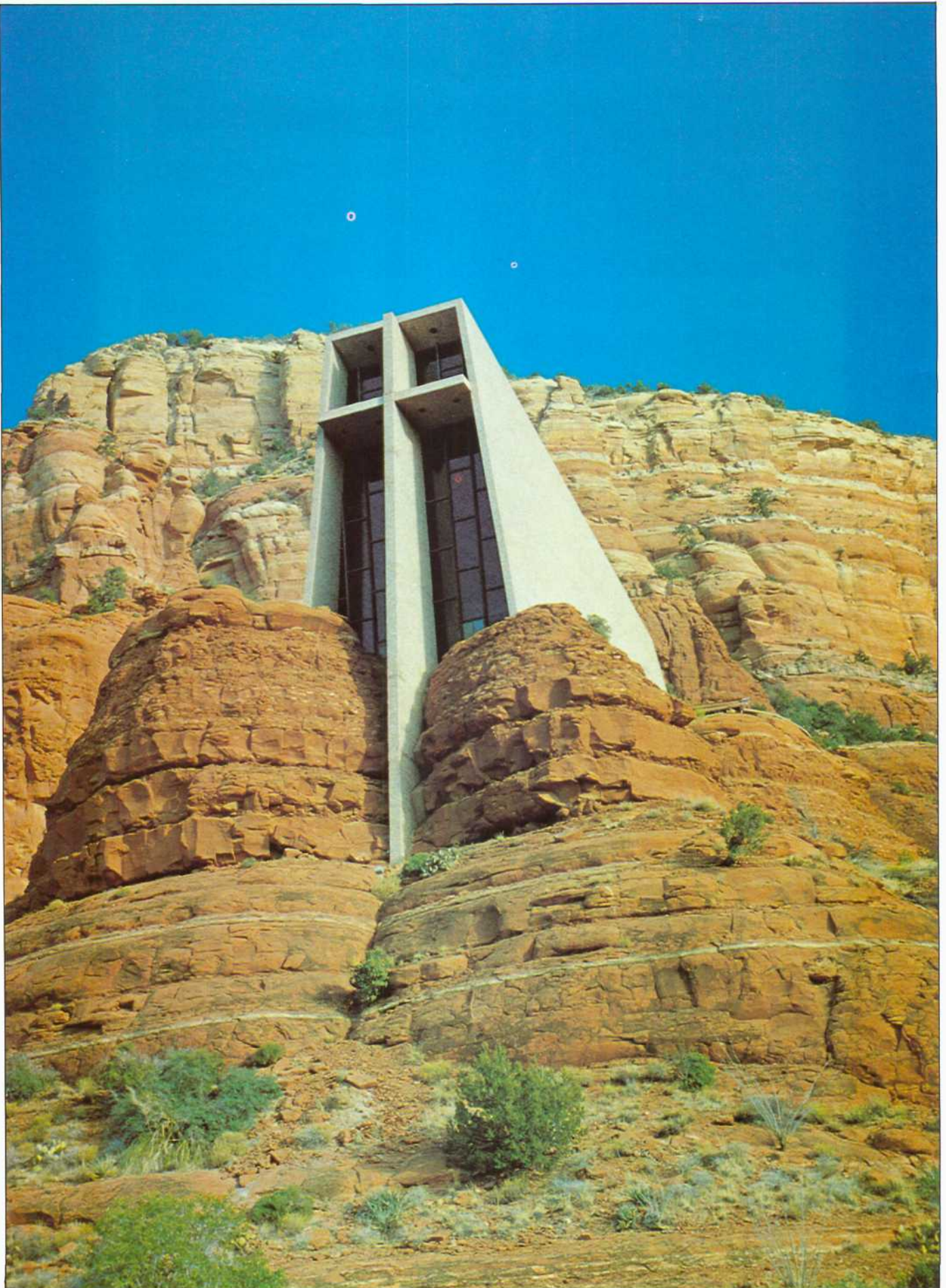


Willard Clay



Top: Lincoln Catholic Church in Lincoln, New Mexico. Bottom: Mission at Las Trampas, New Mexico. Right: The church at Punta de Agua, New Mexico.

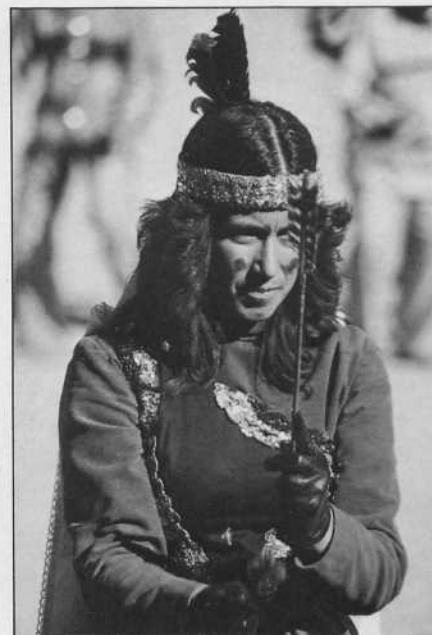




Frank Lloyd Wright designed this church in the red rocks of Sedona, Arizona.



Left: *Los Danzantes and the small Malinches dance.* Right: *One of the Pueblo Indians.*



Tonight, when darkness finally comes to the sky, the faithful gather around the Capilla, a small chapel, where the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe silently waits. In the flicker of candlelight we watch as she is escorted to the village meeting house by men. They wear glittering crowns draped with colorful ribbons, sashes and scarves that bear the likeness of the Virgin. Known as Los Danzantes, they will perform the ritual dances during an all night wake, *el velorio*, to

It is not a solemn occasion
—the faces of the pilgrims
reflect joy and anticipation.

simple repetitious melodies played on the violin. Leading the costumed men are the malinches—small, dark-haired girls wearing white dresses and veils to symbolize innocence. The dancing is interrupted with prayer as villagers kneel before the beloved image. Although it is quite cold and the Casa del Pueblo is unheated, the crowded spectators remain throughout the night.

This celebration is a mixture of Indian and Hispanic influences, and had its origin exactly 450 years ago, when a

peasant witnessed a miracle on the outskirts of Mexico City.

According to the legend, an Indian convert named Juan Diego was crossing barren Mount Tepeyac in December of 1531, when the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to him. She told him to instruct the Bishop-Elect of Mexico to build a chapel for her on that spot. Juan Diego relayed the message to Bishop Fray Juan de Zumarrago who demanded proof of the holy vision. The Indian returned to the mountain. La Virgen Morena (the dark Virgin) reappeared and told him to take some roses which then covered the hillside back to the Bishop. Juan Diego dutifully obeyed, filling his tilma, an apron-like garment, with the scarlet blooms.

Skeptical, Bishop Zumarraga was forced to believe the story when Diego unfolded the tilma. As the roses dropped to the floor, a perfectly imprinted image of the Virgin was visible on the cloth. The chapel was built, and the still-brilliant portrait can be seen today in Mexico City. Because Mount Tepeyac was formerly the site of a sanctuary to Tonantzin, the Aztec goddess of fertility, Indians throughout the New World took this miraculous event as a sign to accept Christianity.

The present-day followers of the Virgin in Tortugas are as devoted to the patron saint of their pueblo as their forefathers were. At 5 a.m., long

before the winter dawn, on the morning of December 11th, they begin the day with a special serenade called the *Mananitas a la Virgen*. Then, they register for the long pilgrimage to the top of Tortugas Mountain, directly East of the village.

As the sky lightens, we shiver in the clear and bitter air. Hundreds of people join us for the demanding ascent; some will walk the 14 miles barefooted to fulfill vows given in prayer to the Virgin of Guadalupe. It is not a

It is a time for celebration,
renewal and promises kept.

solemn occasion—the faces of the pilgrims reflect joy and anticipation of the trek. Children, who do not notice the cold, play tag with friends while parents visit, holding blankets, sack lunches, and Thermos bottles full of coffee. When the leaders bring *Her* small portrait to the front of the procession, we begin.

We pass under the busy Interstate 25 overpass and by the experimental solar house of New Mexico State University. To me, the contrasts between an age-old pilgrimage and modern life in the Southwest are striking. The noise of the highway dims as

FEAST FOR THE SOUL

Continued

we follow a dirt road through the creosote and mesquite terrain leading to the mountain.

At the base, mounds of tires and combustibles mark the three paths to the summit. The oldest and youngest of the group climb the most gradual trail, the young men take the steepest. I follow the middle and am soon out of breath and need to rest.

The bonfires can be seen for miles and they announce the Christmas season to Southern New Mexico.

From my vantage point half-way up the mountain, the Mesilla Valley stretches North and South with bright pools of water in the Rio Grande mirroring the feeble sunshine. Tortugas is an insignificant, raised cluster of adobe houses now, but the intense red of the Casa del Pueblo, Casa de Comida, and tiny Capilla stand out from the rest of the mud-colored structures. Many people pass me carrying tires to pre-arranged spots along the paths all the way to the top of Tortugas Mountain; they urge me on.

The climb proves to be a workout for legs accustomed to walking on level ground. At the top of the mountain, I fall to a flat rock and rub the tight muscles in my calves, noticing how the shrine of La Virgen competes with the university's white observatory for the small crest. We have been walking for nearly three hours.

A priest, robed in white and gold, conducts an outdoor mass after all of the pilgrims have congregated on the summit. One woman remarks that she is closer to God here, and I can understand how she feels. The jagged peaks of the Organ Mountains rise sharply from the desert floor to the East, and the rocky Dona Ana Mountains lay directly to the North. A red-tailed hawk circles high overhead—it *does* seem peaceful and holy.

The afternoon passes quickly, while the faithful fashion quiotes (walking staffs) from yuccas and creosote branches for the descent. Following tradition, the elders dot the faces of those who made the pilgrimage with red paint. As the sun sets on the second

day of the festival, women and children carefully pick their way down the trails to the base. Back at Tortugas, a huge bonfire is lit to guide the hikers to the village.

It is dark when the men descend the slopes. They light the mounds of tires along the three paths on their journey down, creating a bright pyramidal outline against the black sky. The bonfires can be seen from miles away and to many residents of Southern New Mexico, they announce the Christmas season. Tortugans greet the pilgrims at the village with a thanksgiving ritual for their safe return. We huddle near the flames of the bonfire until glowing embers replace the thick wood used in building the fire.

High mass held at the single-spired adobe church, the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe, starts the activities on December 12th—the Virgin's Day. Following the service, pueblo women, who have spent days preparing the feast, invite everyone to the huge lunch at the Casa de Comida. There, they serve chile con carne and albondigas (meatballs) from 11 a.m. until they run out of food. Their warm faces welcome the appetites of both the congregation and visitors to the fiesta.

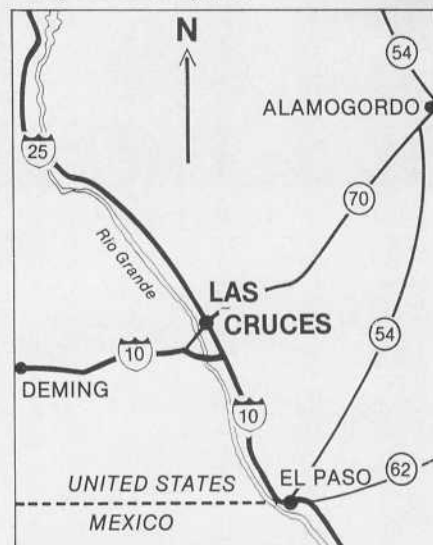
Soon after the meal, the dances begin. Three other groups take turns with Los Danzantes performing on squares around the church. Los Indios del Pueblo are the oldest group to pay homage to La Virgen. The men wear tan, fringed costumes while the women wear black, ribboned dresses called mantas. Members of the Aztecas de Carrizo and Los Guadalupanos Azteca adorn themselves in scarlet and yellow with feathered headdresses. They dance, shaking colorful gourds or raising red bows and arrows to the sky.

Shadows lengthen and we hear the clamor of church bells proclaiming the emergence of the blue-robed image of the Virgin from the church. Tribal officers gather around the decorated likeness, violins play, and are accompanied by the steady drum beats. The villagers join their leaders to sing songs of joy to the Virgin of Guadalupe.

The procession follows the dusty streets around the ceremonial buildings, and I find myself squeezed between dozens of other observers along the edges. The rich colors of the dancers' costumes swirl past as they dance up to the patron saint, bow, turn and run ahead. Children in the crowd imitate the steps, then cover their ears when the blasts from a 12-gauge shotgun shatter the air to dispel evil spirits. The multitude stops in front of the

Casa del Pueblo where the priest gives a short benediction. We continue the slow pace back to the church. The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe ends as the Virgin is carried inside and the luminarios on top of the Santuario are lit.

Once again, the sun slips behind the western bank of clouds, shooting amber rays behind the dark church before its final retreat. As the masses disperse in the quiet twilight, I know that I am among the growing number of people who will return each year in mid-December to the desert village of Tortugas. It is a time for celebration, renewal and promises kept to the Dark Lady who appeared so long ago, so many miles away. **[2]**



Las Cruces, New Mexico, home of the Tortugas and the Feast for the Soul.

Pamela and Russell Bamert are full-time freelancers based in Las Cruces, New Mexico. They work regularly for New Mexico magazine, and have had articles and photography published in Chevron USA, AAA World, Colorado magazine and Lapidary Journal. After attending and photographing the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe for five years, they've come to know and love the people of Tortugas.



DESERT CHRIST Park

One man's monument to
his religious convictions.



Text by Jack W. Kriege
Photography by
Jean Kriege

The glare of the mid-afternoon sun mellowed slightly as we emerged from the lonely desolation of Highway 62 and found ourselves suddenly surrounded by buildings, signal lights and traffic. We were in Yucca Valley, a small community between Twentynine Palms and Palm Springs. The appearance of civilization seemed at first to be a

welcome oasis in the scorching desert, but then we felt betrayed by this aberrant intrusion in the natural beauty of the terrain.

Both perceptions quickly faded, however, as we concentrated on the task of locating the park which was nestled obscurely off the highway north of town. It was not highly publicized, and even the description of the attraction in the American Automobile Association Tourbook was very brief and unassuming:

DESERT CHRIST PARK
½ mi. n. of Twentynine
Palms Hwy., has cement
figures depicting the life of
Christ. Daily to dark.
Donations.

We turned off the highway and eventually followed a narrow dirt road which wound a short distance up into low rocky hills, and terminated in a dusty parking area. A few white figures were visible among the yucca trees and desert shrubs, but from this vantage point they appeared unspectacular.

We stepped aimlessly past some rocks and low brush, and found ourselves surrounded by an impressive tableau. We were immersed in yet a third contradiction—this one magnified by a suspension of reality. No other visitors were in the park at this moment. The dozens of figures about us provided the illusion that we were participating in the events of Christ's life. We moved about in settings similar to those described in the biblical passages. Time itself seemed suspended as we traced the chronology of events presented.

In the foreground and to either side, a dozen stark white figures, larger than life-size, stand in the sparse brush in hushed observance of a single figure facing them, arms outstretched. It is the Sermon on the Mount. The attention of the statues and the silent movement of the shrubs in the light breeze stir recollection of the message delivered at this gathering—*Blessed are the poor in spirit...*

A short distance away, a seated figure of Christ asks that the children be allowed to come to him. In a more elaborate setting, before a background of columns and large bushes, he receives a group of parents and blesses their children—*Suffer the little children to come unto me...*

Preceding page: *The life of Christ is depicted in the various tableaus of statues.*

The figures were all constructed by a single artist—Antone Martin—using only his hands and a few simple tools.

To the left, a large portico projects majestically above ivy-covered walls. Three figures are positioned in a seemingly conversational pose. A closer inspection, however, reveals that one is removed from the conversation, an expression of sad intent carved in her facial contour. The scene depicts Jesus' visit to Martha and Mary at the home of Lazarus—*Thy brother shall rise again...*

In the distance is a huge sculpture of "The Last Supper." It is three stories high, and presents the traditional depiction of Christ and the disciples at the table, carved in bas-relief. Only the head of Christ, projecting into an open window, is presented in three dimensions—*One of you shall betray me...*

On a hillside, three figures lie in apparent slumber, while a figure of Jesus kneels in prayer a short distance away. The scene is enhanced as we imagine that it is enveloped by the gloom of darkness, for this is the recreation of the final hours in the Garden of Gethsemane—*Behold, the hour is at hand...*

Three white figures can be seen on a nearby hill, gathered around a stone reconstruction of the open tomb. The shadows create the illusion of early morning light, and they gaze in awe at the form of the empty burial shroud resting inside—*He is not here; for He is risen...*


High on a knoll overlooking the park, removed from the clusters of figures, as if in approval of the works, a huge figure of Christ stands with arms raised high. The statue appears to shimmer in the sun, and becomes almost semi-visible, as though in portrayal of the final ascension—*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...*

The silence of the mysterious recollections was broken by the sounds of modern time. Car doors slammed, and the voices of other visitors to the park intruded on our solace. Our observance of the figures had continued longer than we had imagined. The shadows caused by the late afternoon sun reminded us that we had many miles to travel.

We stopped to leave a donation and read some information about the development of the park, and were further intrigued by the story of the construction of the figures. Altogether, there are nearly four dozen in the park, all sculpted by a single artist—Antone Martin. Their underlying construction was made of conventional concrete, molded around steel rods which extend into an underground block of concrete. The outside coating is a half-inch thickness of a special mixture developed by Martin. He used his hands for most of the work. The few tools needed to create the finished forms were simple—trowels, hammers, chisels and saws. The completed works are unbelievably massive, weighing from four to 16 tons each.

Antone Martin himself was as enigmatic as the nature of his creations. He was an orphan, born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1887. He never went to school and spent the first portion of his life in relative obscurity as a camp roustabout, woodcarver and sculptor. Despite his lack of education, Martin became a senior pattern maker and design engineer for aircraft in World War II.

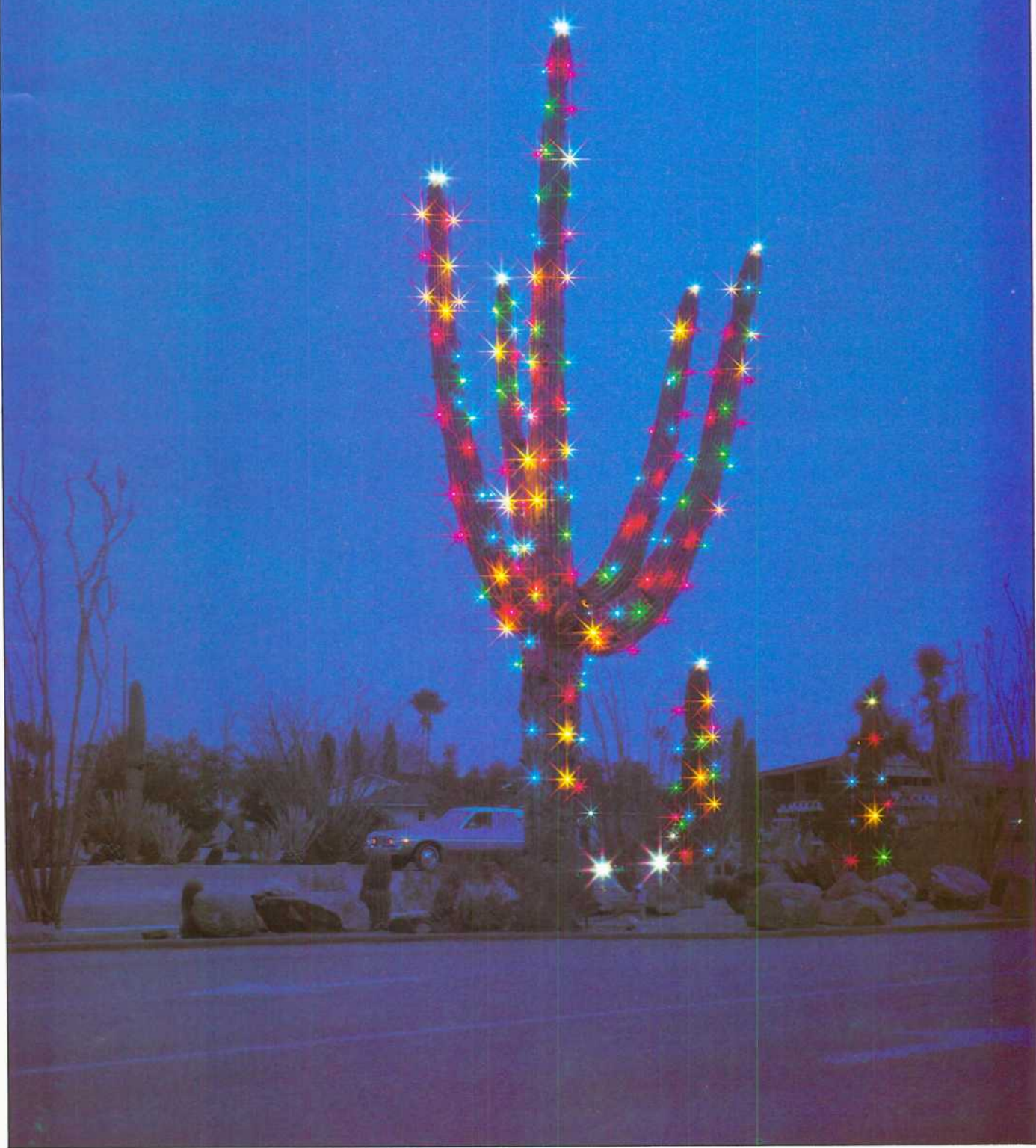
Martin had developed strong religious beliefs. The destruction of the war deeply disturbed him, and he began developing art work as a protest to this destruction. The statues in Desert Christ Park were created from 1951 to 1961, as his concept of peace on earth and good will toward men. From 1953 to 1961, he lived on the park site so that he could devote his entire time to the construction of the figures. When he died in 1961, at the age of 74, the park was presented to the Yucca Valley Park and Recreation District. It is now administered as a public park and has been dedicated as a world peace shrine.

As we left Yucca Valley, we were grateful that we had taken the time to complete the tour of Desert Christ Park, for it was a unique and moving experience. 

Jack Kriege is presently the Director of Research and Development for the Grossmont Union High School District, in El Cajon, California. He and his wife, Jean, gathered the information for this article while on a motorcycle tour of Southern California and Arizona.



A Desert Christmas Card





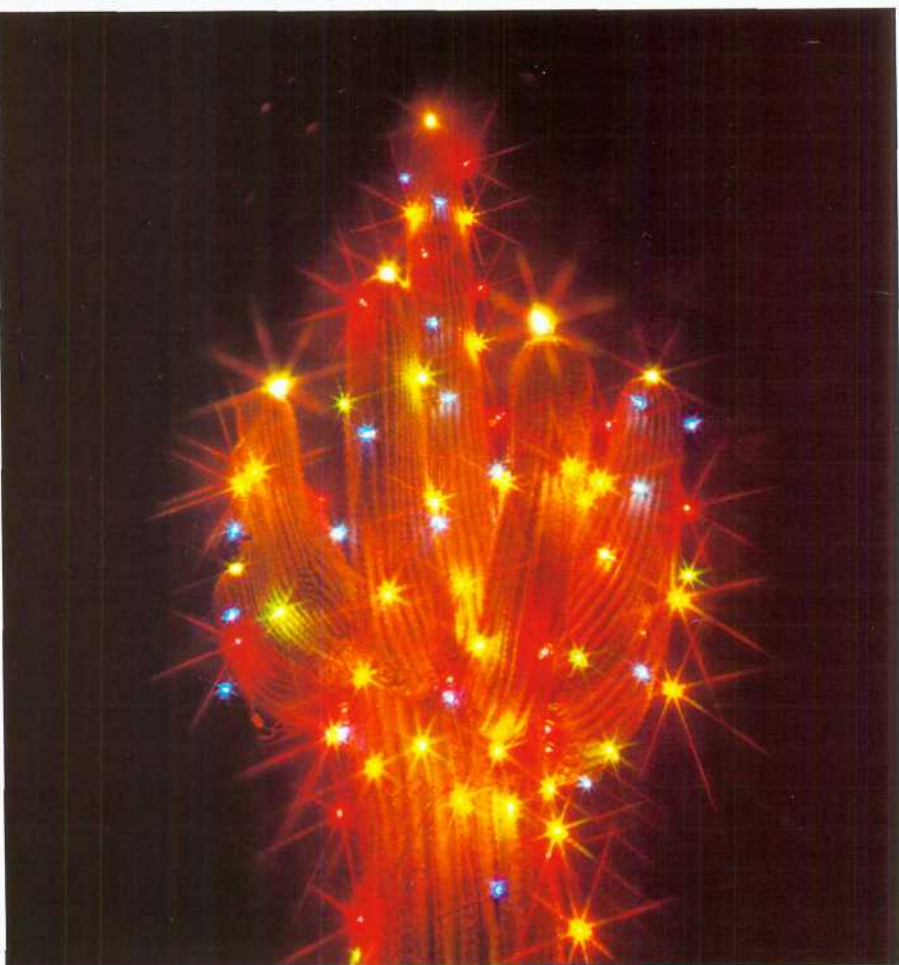
Let there be lights...and tinsel, and statuettes, and paper angels and luminarios. Let there be all the decoration that is Christmas.

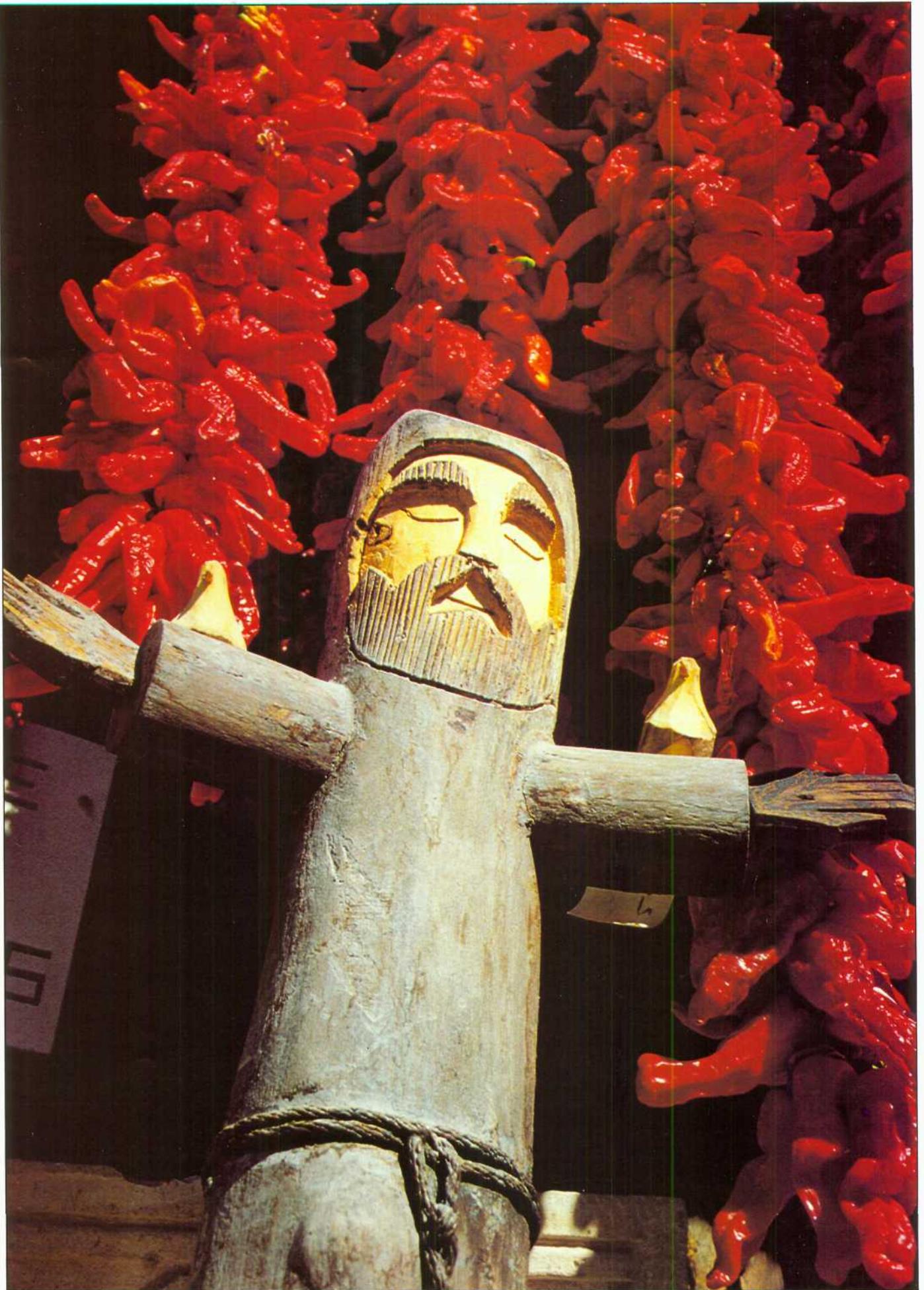
Our experience of Christmas begins with the decorations, not with the Christian stories. We delight to the sparkle of lights and ornaments before we have any understanding of their connection to the spiritual holiday. With this in mind, *Desert* magazine challenges you to capture on film (color slides only) the spirit of Christmas in the communities of the Southwest. This is not so much a challenge as an opportunity to help us put together a Christmas portfolio next year. This is your magazine for your part of the country. Give me the best you have to offer and I will give it back to you better still.

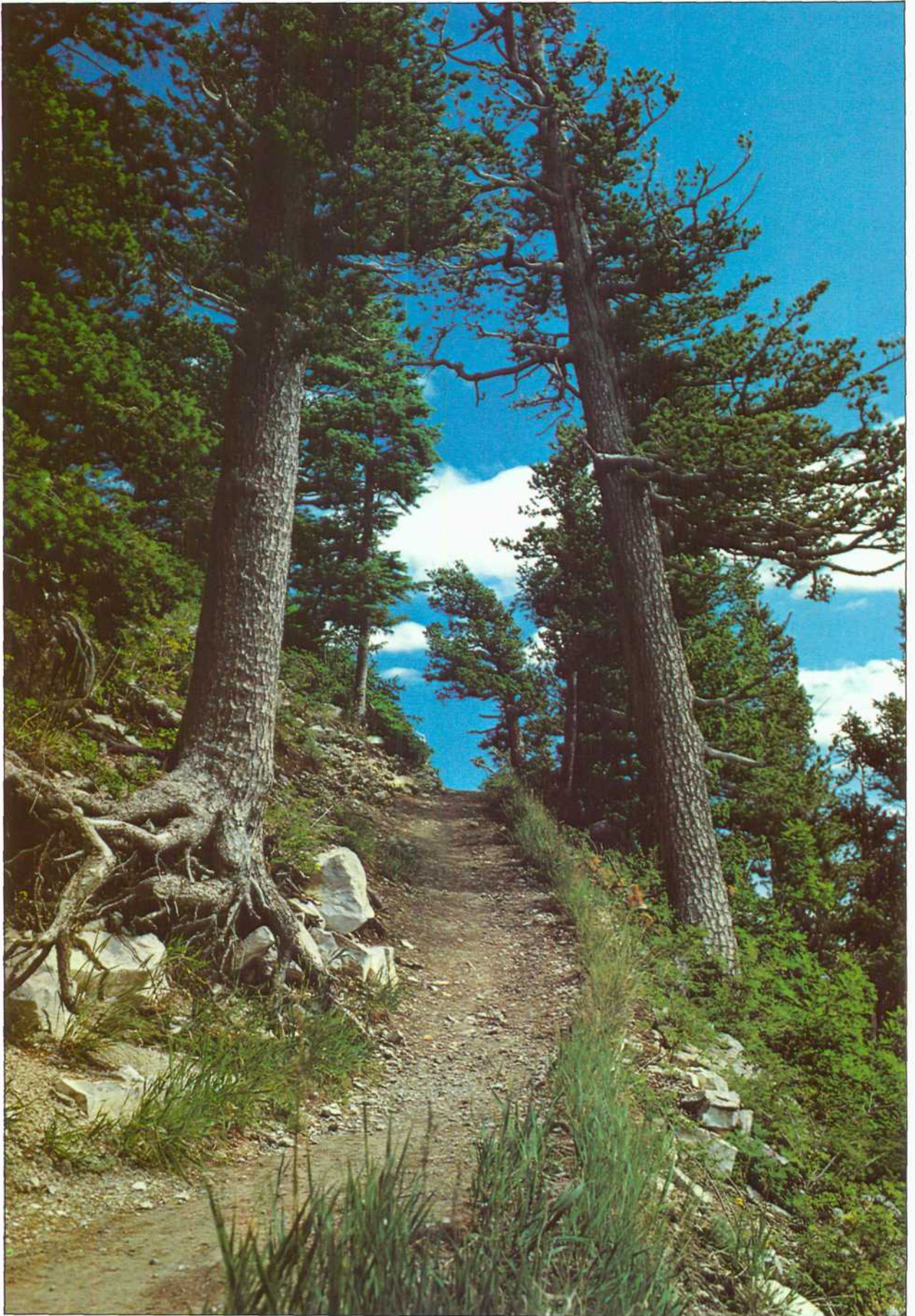
Stephen Simpson,
Editor

Preceding page: This is how Mountain Shadows Resort in Paradise Valley, Arizona utilizes its saguaros. Above: Every year luminarios glow at the Emerson home in Mesilla, New Mexico. Right: More saguaro Christmas trees. Far right: One more example of the unique uses of decorations in the desert.

Noel Wheeler









W.W. Wilson

From the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Collection. Courtesy of Nebraska State Historical Society.

Willa Cather's Lonely Road

Seeking new frontiers, Cather and character wander alone in a timeless and beautiful Southwest.

Text by Dennis Mayes

Though I majored in journalism and English in college (with emphasis on American literature), I ignored Willa Cather until years later.

Living in Mexico City for a summer, I checked out from the American Embassy compound library a copy of *O Pioneers!* and was transported back to the United States. The experience prompted a systematic reading of Willa Cather's work. After visiting New Mexico and Arizona myself, I began to wonder why the critics made much of her Nebraska years, and all but ignored what appeared to be a

more pervasive influence—her particular attachment to the desert Southwest.

It is for this reason that I wrote what follows, an account of a woman whose feelings and emotions for the desert show through in her writing.

"One afternoon in the autumn of 1851 a solitary horseman, followed by a pack-mule, was pushing through an arid stretch of country somewhere in central New Mexico. He had lost his way and was trying to get back to the trail, with only his compass and his sense of direction for guides."

This lone traveler heading across the



The endless desert as travelled by Father Latour.

desert Southwest toward Santa Fe is Jean Marie Latour, title character of Willa Cather's *Death Comes For The Archbishop*. The experience described is also Cather's journey on a sometimes lonely road through American literature.

Both character and author abandoned older, traditional societies for new frontiers. Both overcame criticism and misunderstanding. Both trusted their individual sense of direction for guidance. In the barren Southwest, both Latour and Cather found a source of beauty.

Her first published book, *April Twilights* (1903), a collection of poetry, shows classical and European influence. Her first novel, *Alexander's Bridge*, was, she wrote, "the result of meeting some interesting people in London. Like many young writers, I thought a book should be made out of 'interesting materials'..."

A six-month visit to New Mexico and Arizona altered her sense of direction. The quality of life she found so attractive in the Southwest, the land itself, eventually emerged in *Death Comes For The Archbishop*, but her encounter with the Southwest did more than provide material for one book. It affected the course of her career, and helped shape a personal credo.

Quoted material is from Death Comes For The Archbishop (1927). . . or from Willa Cather's non-fiction writing collected in Not Under Forty (1936) and Willa Cather On Writing (1949), all published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Most immediately, she saw her first novel as unnecessary and superficial. "I did no writing down there," she commented years later, "but I recovered from the conventional editorial viewpoint."

She began, for herself, an unconventional book about farmers and Swedes, neighbors in Nebraska where her family moved when she was a child. Reviewers did not hesitate to point out that in an age saturated with Henry James and Edith Wharton, this was not a promising literary road to venture down. A New York critic said of *O Pioneers!*: "I simply don't care what happens in Nebraska, no matter who writes about it."

The criticism stung, but Willa Cather wrote that this second novel "was like taking a ride through a familiar country on a horse that knew the way, on a fine morning when you felt like riding. The other was like riding in a park, with someone not altogether congenial, to whom you had to be talking all the time."

The road to self-discovery had been foreshadowed in the spring of 1895 when she was an undergraduate at the University of Nebraska. Meeting Stephen Crane, author of *The Red Badge of Courage*, she eagerly sought his opinion of the French author Maupassant, but what she remembered when writing about that meeting was something Crane told her about his own writing: "The detail of a thing has to filter through my blood, and then it comes out like a native product, but it takes forever."

Thirty years later, a curious echo of this idea appeared in one of Cather's rare non-fiction essays. Two years before *Death Comes For The Archbishop* was published in 1927, she opened her introduction to collected stories of Sarah Orne Jewett (whose narratives of Maine she much admired) with this quotation from a Jewett letter: "The thing that teases the mind over and over for years, and at last gets itself put down rightly on paper—whether little or great, it belongs to Literature."

During that first visit to the Southwest, something began teasing Willa Cather's mind. It would continue to haunt her over the years—drawing her back to the land, filtering through her blood, waiting for the appropriate time to be set down rightly on paper.

By 1922, when she wrote "The Novel Demeuble," she was no longer entranced by everything European. Although she admired Balzac for "the types of greed, avarice, ambition, vanity and lost innocence of heart which he created," she wrote of his mass of material detail: "The city he built on paper is already crumbling." She could not forget the austere—yet beautiful—simplicity of the desert landscape where Father Latour would attempt "to get back to the trail."

"The writing of the book only took a few months, because it had all been lived many times before it was written, and the happy mood in which I began it never paled."

Willa Cather

She began to craft a prose style that is simple without being simplistic, full of emotion without being sentimental or overly romantic, rugged like the land it portrays, expressive of Cather's individuality, as unadorned as the desert itself. She became a master of understatement, and *Archbishop's* final scene—the death of Latour—can overwhelm a reader through sheer restraint. It is succinct writing in which quality, rather than quantity, of detail matters most.

"When I first went into the Southwest 15 years ago," she wrote in a famous open letter to *The Common-*

wealth, "I stayed there for a considerable period of time. It was then much harder to get about than it is today. There were no automobile roads and no hotels off the main lines of the railroad. One had to travel by wagon and carry a camp outfit. One traveled slowly, and had plenty of time for reflection."

"When I first went into the Southwest some 15 years ago, one had to travel by wagon and carry a camp outfit. One traveled slowly, and had plenty of time for reflection."
Willa Cather

Willa Cather's brother, Douglas, who worked for the Southern Pacific, introduced her to the land. A Belgian priest at Santa Cruz, Father Haltermann, introduced her to Indians and their culture. She went back as often as she could.

From the first, what interested her most—against her will—was the experience of Old World missionaries in that harsh, arid New World. Yet she refused to write about the subject. She felt that material was the province of a Roman Catholic writer.

Nonetheless, the experiences of Jean Baptiste Lamy, Bishop of New Mexico (Father Latour in the book), and his friend Joseph P. Machebeuf, Bishop of Colorado (Father Vaillant), were as irresistible as the land where they lived.

"I heard a great many interesting stories about Lamy from very old Mexicans and traders who still remembered him," she wrote, "and I never passed the life-size bronze of him, which stands under a locust tree before the Cathedral of Santa Fe, without wishing that I could learn more about a pioneer churchman who looked so well-bred and distinguished."

In her student days, she had seen frescoes of the life of Saint Genevieve and wanted to try something in the style of legend. In Lamy, she found her legendary figure.

Then, in 1925, at Santa Fe, she came upon a book written by a priest who had served with Bishop Machebeuf in Denver. The volume contained

many letters Machebeuf wrote to his sister in France. In the detailed observations and feelings about the Southwest contained in these letters, Willa Cather found confirmation of her own enchantment.

She began her narrative. "The writing of it took only a few months," she commented, "because the book had all been lived many times before it was written, and the happy mood in which I began it never paled."

Death Comes For The Archbishop is a unique gem in American literature. It is more than a short story, not a typical novel. It is more than a biography, not quite history. E.K. Brown, Cather's critical biographer, called it a "frieze", which, indeed, it does resemble. Reviewers complained the work defied neat classification. Amused, Willa Cather called it, simply, a narrative.

Attention to essential detail makes the work one of the most powerful evocations of the American Southwest ever written. There is hardly a fully complete paragraph of description, yet sky, clouds, hills, mountains, precious wellsprings and streams, sand and sunsets—these distinctive features of the Southwest pervade the book. As they filtered into the author's mind during her repeated visits, these images seep into the mind of a reader. And they linger.

There are those who would argue that the desert is most beautiful late in the day, when it takes on the colors of sunset. Many scenes in *Archbishop* occur at that time of day, beginning with Latour's arrival at his destination:

"As the wagons went forward and the sun sank lower, a sweep of red carnelian-colored hills lying at the foot of the mountains came into view; they curved like two arms about a depression in the plain; and in that depression was Santa Fe, at last!... The church towers, and all the low adobe houses, were rose-color in that light—little darker in tone than the amphitheater of red hills behind—and periodically the plumes of poplars flashed like gracious accent marks, inclining and recovering themselves in the wind."

The winds of critical taste continue to blow, but Cather's achievement still stands.

Writing of Sarah Orne Jewett, she gave a prophetic description of her own work: "...since her death, masterpieces have been bumping down upon us like trunks pouring down the


baggage chutes from an overcrowded ocean steamer. But if you can get out from under them and go to a quiet spot and take up a volume... you will find the voice still there, with a quality which any ear trained in literature must recognize."

Over the arid plain, where the solitary horseman wanders with his

"As the wagons went forward and the sun sank lower, a sweep of red hills lying at the foot of the mountains came into view; they curved like two arms about a depression in the plain; and in that depression was Santa Fe, at last!"

Willa Cather

pack-mule, where Cather traveled by railroad and camp wagon; hang gliders now soar from a wind-swept ridge of the Sandia Mountains. The wild towns of Santa Fe and Albuquerque which Latour encounters are now refined cities with museums, art galleries, boutiques and opera. Yet in quiet spots, taking time to observe and reflect, you can still find there the enchanting landscape that so bewilders the priest and that, for most of her life, so captivated the author.

This arid stretch of country gave new direction to Cather's career. In return, fashioning at last what Stephen Crane called "a native product," she gave America's desert Southwest to the world. Neither the land nor the loving sketch she made of it in *Death Comes For The Archbishop* shows any sign of crumbling. 

Dennis Mayes' writing has appeared in varied publications, including Saturday Evening Post, Alaska Woman, and Boy's Life. He is also a frequent contributor to The Christian Science Monitor. He is a resident of the Austin, Texas area; we welcome him to the pages of Desert.



A desert community lights up the season with pride.

Winterhaven

You touch tens of thousands of people through these Christmas displays. So there's no way you can forget the experience," said Jeffrey Brown. "Our family will be involved and support Winterhaven's Christmas Festival of Lights for as long as we live here."

Artistic Jeff Brown, a 17-year-old Catalina High School senior in Tucson, Arizona, is the designer of 1980's Grand Prize front lawn display: "Merry Christmas From The Children Of The World!"

Winterhaven is an 87-acre subdivision situated along the north-central city limits of Tucson. Since 1951, when outdoor Christmas lighting began, Winterhaven has become a southern Arizona showplace during the Christmas season.

Two years ago, a traffic counter, strung across Winterhaven's curving, park-like main street called Christmas Avenue, tallied 87,260 vehicles cruising bumper to bumper during the two-week festival.

Young Brown contained, "My display included 21 figures of people from various countries including our own. Turkey, Greece, Japan and Mexico were among them. I did a lot of research to get the right costumes.

The Stanley E. Brown home and lawn display also won Grand Prize honors in 1978. Jeff was the designer

in that case, too.

We let Jeff have free rein," his father said. "My wife, Shirley, and our other four children support him fully, but he comes up with the ideas." The Browns have lived in Winterhaven since 1964.

"When people come up and congratulate you for winning, well, that's the fun of the effort. They realize the work involved and really appreciate it," Jeff said. "That is primarily the whole feeling of reward. I've had teachers come up at school and say, 'Wow! We drove through Winterhaven last night and saw your grand prize front lawn. Congratulations!'"

Lighting project chairman this year is Godfrey Sill, a Winterhaven resident since 1975 and a research scientist at the University of Arizona's Lunar and Planetary Laboratory.

"Being astronomers, we began with star themes for our first Christmas here. So, to the star of Bethlehem we added the Orion constellation in overhead white lights. For the right shoulder of Orion I used a larger red bulb for Betelgeuse, which means a giant's armpit. On the lawn the Magi approached the manger scene," Sill said.

"One year, Laurel (his wife) designed our theme with Mary sitting in a chair, holding the infant Jesus. Another combination of star constella-

tions was overhead.

"I found it exceedingly difficult to make an exhibit look like the constellations because the magnitudes of the bulbs just don't match the way they look in the sky. Everything looked too bright. Even dim stars. And stars that were to be five times as bright looked only twice as bright," the lighting chairman said.

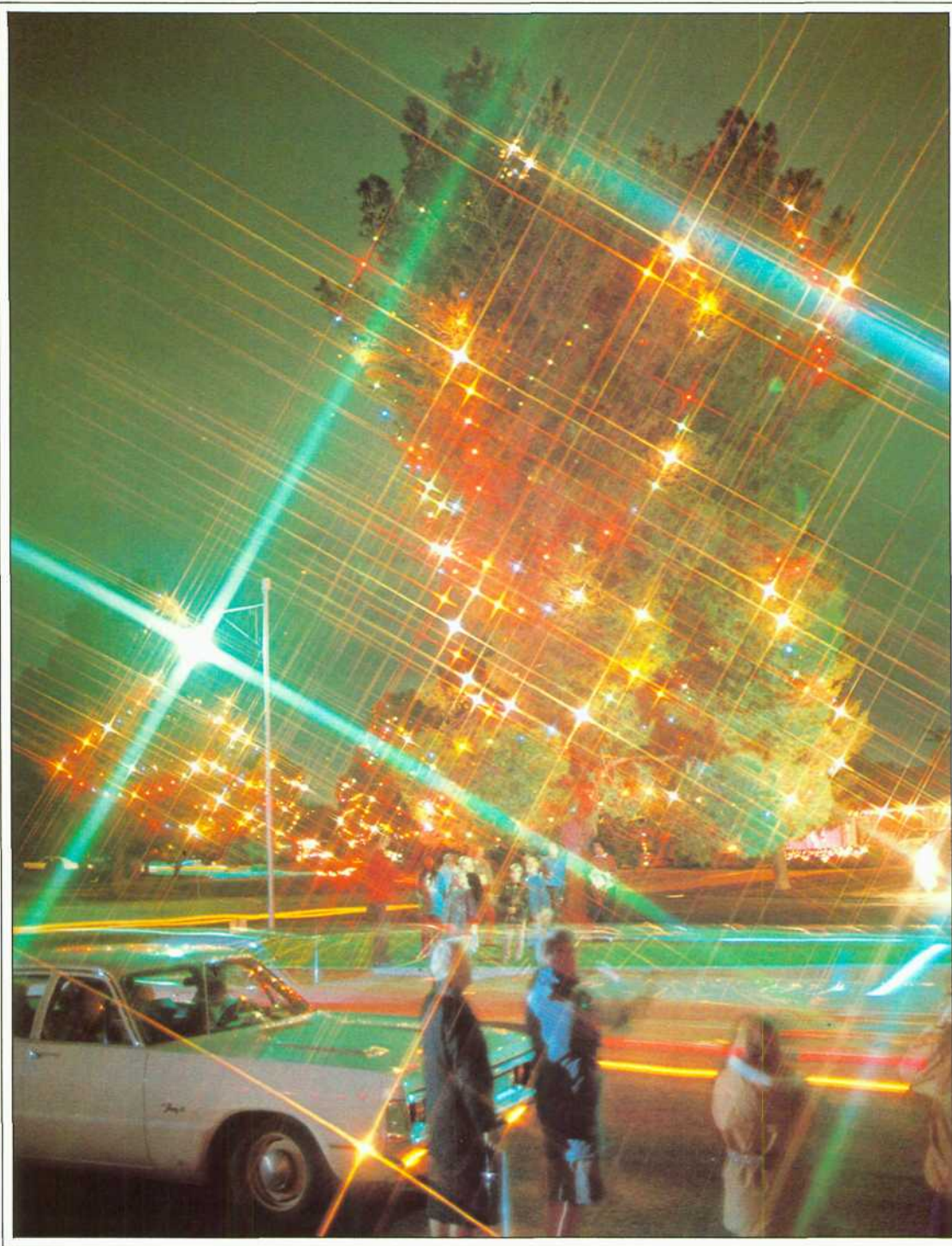
In 1979 the Sills switched from constellations to the space program. "Because the Voyager satellite was speeding through the solar system, we put Santa Claus on a Mariner craft, leaving earth for a space journey. One year we had a model of Jupiter rotating on its axis. It won honorable mention," Sill added.

Sill does not miss snow at Christmas, after having lived for more than three decades in snowbelt scenes, from Chicago to Massachusetts.

"I guess there wasn't any snow in Israel when Christ was born anyway. I feel it's a purely cultural thing that there has to be snow on the ground at Christmas. Shoot! All you have to do during a Tucson winter is go into the mountains surrounding us. Mount Lemmon is only 30 miles away in the Santa Catalinas. They ski up there.

"I suppose there's a certain mystique about snow and Christmas decorations. Every night Laurel and I walk in the neighborhood, looking at

By Dan B. McCarthy



Winterhaven's main street, Christmas Avenue, tallied 87,000 cars cruising bumper to bumper during the two-week festival.

different scenes, surrounded by the season's cheer. Don't forget, having pines on the Sonoran Desert is something different, too. I can easily live without the snow," he said.

"We've had snow on Easter (twice that I remember). And, we've had some 85-degree, sunny days on Christmas. Usually, it's too mild to look for snow on Winterhaven streets."

"I've always considered Christmas to be paramount of the religious holidays. That's what the whole thing is about, and I believe there's a community spirit of camaraderie attached to the festival.

"When the city maintenance crew comes out early on the designated Saturday, to assist with wire stringing from their cherry-picker machines, well, people gather around to hold strands of cords so they don't tangle. They help unwind the long wires. At noon, crewmen are treated to a community-organized luncheon.

"Now, there are some who'll grouch about the traffic, or exhaust fumes. Some older residents have had yearly displays since 1951 or so. They're taking it easy now, cutting back, maybe just watching.

"It's not obligatory to light up your home, and I'm sure that's why the festival does so well. Most people are decent and polite if they don't agree with the lights," Sill observed.

Lela Aldrich, this year's president of the Winterhaven Association, said that about 90 percent of the 287 homeowners enter lawn displays when the community lights up.

Time needed to prepare displays varies. At the Stanley Brown home, just as soon as the Halloween costumes are packed away, the family starts thinking and working on their Christmas display. Godfrey Sill said four or five days of work are needed. One resident smiles wryly, then said, "Twenty minutes!" but amended to "more than a full day."

Lights shine splendidly from about darkness to 10 p.m., though there is no official turning off or on times in the regulation. Several residents indicated that occasional vandalism occurs after midnight on weekends, if it happens at all.

"Two years ago, when Jeff won his first Grand Prize," said Shirley Brown, "two young boys kicked or pushed over most of the figures in our display when they ran up on the lawn about one in the morning. I heard this terrible noise out front, looked out the window just as they were running

Dan McCarthy



Sister Mary Donnellan does her final touch-ups on the Madonna.

Dan McCarthy



Jeffrey Brown, award winner, adjusts costumes on his display.

**"Having pines on the
Sonoran desert is
something different, but I
can easily live without the
snow."**

Godfrey Sill

toward a car and drove off.

"It was the morning of Christmas Eve. Luckily, judging had been completed a night or two before. Heads were knocked from figures and costumed bodies were tipped over. The large world globe was not bothered," Mrs. Brown said.

"We got started at 8 a.m. to repair damages. Neighbors stopped by, doing things to help restore, and by 3 p.m., the display was almost back to normal except for some mending tape that showed a little and extra props that were used behind the figures," said Jeff.

"A few hours later, Christmas Eve, judges came by and drove a sign into the ground in front which declared it the Grand Prize entry! Lots of people had gathered. They cheered and there were tears in our family. Twelve hours earlier, everything was just plain dismal for me," Jeff concluded.

Judges are selected annually from the University of Arizona, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, private industry and professional people; plus members of the art circles in Tucson. Five judges, working independently review the displays and meet to decide. New judges are named each year.

W.O. (Bill) Fraesdorf, Jr., a real estate broker, who originally worked with the late C.B. Richards to open the subdivision, said "The name, Winterhaven, was C.B.'s idea," he said, "and yes, he wanted Winterhaven to become a magnet, drawing buyers from the snowbelt areas, but Aleppo pines, Italian cypress and arbor vitae were not purchased with a future Christmas lighting theme in mind.

"The trees," said Fraesdorf, "were simply a good buy. A nurseryman in town had to move to larger quarters from the congested university area, or retire. He retired, but not before a hundred or so of those trees were bought by Richards.

"In 1951, Christmas tree lighting began as a subdivision event," Fraesdorf said. "A year or two earlier I had seen the Beverly Hills Christmas lights in California, mentioned it to C.B. and he went for the idea; so did the pioneer homeowners.

"Winterhaven's main street was named Christmas Avenue. The subdivision is patterned after Shaker Heights near Cleveland. Fact is, people there sent us some of their street plans which we followed; and we used their homeowners' regulations for guidelines."

Four years ago Sister Mary Donnellan, a Franciscan Missionary, and her companion, Sister May Stephen Liu (who moved to the United States in 1965 from Hong Kong) became residents of Winterhaven.

"There's a lot of communication going on during decorating time," observes Sister Donnellan, who is

Continued on page 53

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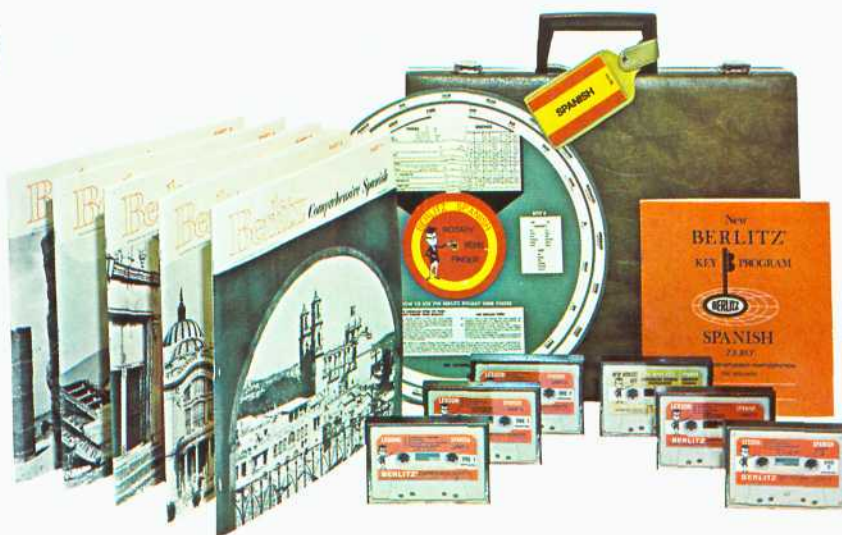
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OUR DESERT HERITAGE



Another trip into our *Desert* archives reaps this photo which ties in with the Indian religion in the desert (see page 56). These Hopi Indians proudly display some of the ceremonial tools of their religion. Both Kachinas and tribal drums play an important part in their beliefs. This photo was taken sometime in 1940.

Desert Magazine Goes Camping!



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CALENDAR

December 1 — December 31

Arizona

Dec. 4-6: The Mineralogical Society of Arizona is holding their eighth annual Gem and Mineral Show at the Arizona State Fairgrounds, located at 19th Avenue and McDowell in Phoenix. For further information, contact Barbara Langland, 4228 45th Street, Phoenix, AZ 85018.

Dec. 11: The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum will be dedicating the second phase of their Earth Sciences Center. The new exhibits will be open to the public on December 11th, but the dedication will be held on December 10th at 11 a.m. The museum is located 14 miles west of Tucson in the Tucson Mountains. For more information on the exhibits and opening, please call Jess Riggle at (602) 624-0493.

California

Dec. 5: The Sea and Sage Audubon Society looks for rare birds of prey wintering in the desert. A group will meet at 7 a.m. at the intersection of Highway 58 and Harper Dry Lake Road near Antelope Valley. For further information, call (714) 974-8250.

Dec. 5-6: The Santa Monica Gemological, Westside Mineralogical and Los Angeles Lapidary Societies will be sponsoring the Red Carpet Gem and Mineral Show. It will be held at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, 1855 Main Street, Santa Monica. Hours are: Saturday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Admission: adults, \$2.75; 12 through 15 years, \$.50; under 12, free. There will be working demonstrations, member and special guest exhibits and 38 retail dealers for all your Christmas needs. For further information contact Ted Boehme, 1234 26th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404, or call (213) 828-1036.

Dec. 5-6: The Kaiser Rock Club is holding their fifth annual Gem and Mineral Show in Fontana on Cherry Avenue. Hours are Saturday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For further information contact Arvid Melvin, 9734 Tangelo, Bloomington, CA 92316, or call (714) 877-0731.

Dec. 12-13: The American River Gem and Mineral Society, Inc. is

holding their 17th annual show, *Winter Wonderland of Gems*, at the Placer County Fairgrounds, Highway 65 at All-American Boulevard, Roseville. Hours are Saturday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, contact Robert Goldsworth, 10361 Daniel Way, Rancho Cordova, CA 94570, or call (916) 363-1424.

Nevada

Dec. 9-11: The California Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus is sponsoring the fourth annual Western Tourism Conference at the Las Vegas Hilton in Las Vegas. For further information, contact Fran Schwartz, Conference Coordinator, 9911 W. Pico Boulevard, Suite 630, Los Angeles, CA 90035.

Dec. 12: The Lake Mead Resort is sponsoring the fifth annual *Parade of Lights*. It can be viewed from Lake Mead Marina or Hemmingway and Boulder swim beaches on Lake Shore Road. The boats line up at 5:30 p.m. and the parade starts at 6 p.m. For more information, contact Pamela J. Hamm at (702) 293-3484.

New Mexico

Dec. 6-31: The *Fiesta Encantada* is the December multi-cultural celebration of the holidays in Albuquerque. It will begin on the 6th and continue through the 31st. This year's events will take place in Old Town area, downtown, Petroglyph Park and elsewhere throughout the city. For a more detailed listing of activities, please contact the Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau, P.O. Box 26866, Albuquerque, NM 87125.

The Desert Calendar is a service for our readers. We want to let them know what is happening on the desert. We need items from all of the Southwestern states, so if you are having an event, or even a year-round activity, let us know. There is no charge for items listed in the Calendar. We only ask that you submit it to us at least three months prior to the event. We (and our readers) want to hear from you.

WINTERHAVEN

Continued from page 48

director of volunteers in a Tucson nursing home. "People are coming and going, offering a hand if you need it in your display. They're talking to you. They may not talk much the rest of the year but this stirs them up. It's a wonderful way to keep the community spirit alive during the Christmas holidays," she said.

"All our displays have centered around the Madonna and the infant Jesus. Twice we received honorable mention," the nun said.

"I see a lot of good in this event and believe that most people have the right approach. However, some messages including atom bombs, war and peace, ecology and such—have nothing to do with the true meaning of Christmas. To me this festival is not the place for negativism—that detracts from the joy of the season.

"Christmas is the children's celebration. They understand, and accept, the meaning of a fun time, tree lights, special home, school and church events, and sure, jingle bells! I feel we should hold to that premise," Sister Mary Donnellan said.

Ask several people how high a tree is in your neighborhood and then listen to the various "guesstimates." So, too, in Winterhaven. Nobody would say for sure how high the cherry-picker crews have to reach to lace the farthest branches with cords and bulbs.

John D. McCullen, last year's Christmas lighting chairman and a physics professor at the University of Arizona, said he didn't want to simply guess. "When I get home tonight I'll triangulate a bit and let you know." Over the telephone that night he said, "Okay, one of the two highest Italian cypress trees on Christmas Avenue is just under 70 feet. The other is just at 60 feet. Now, there might be a taller tree somewhere in Winterhaven.

"When we moved out here in 1965," he continued, "my wife, Betty, and I helped string wires simply by using bamboo poles which easily reached any necessary heights."

Winterhaven's pine tree stature rests on McCullen's figures.

In 1951, approximately 50 of the 287 homes were completed within Winterhaven's half-mile square boundaries. A resident since then is A.A. McCarthy, a retired Air Force colonel. "Our scene in 1951," he said, "showed Santa nearing earth, after having bailed out of an aircraft in a

surplus parachute. Today he comes by helicopter, surfboard, four-wheel-drive—the sleigh and reindeer aren't so popular. And, 30 years ago, people told us that having him hit the silk with gifts was pretty novel stuff."

Phillip Bramley and his wife, Katrin, have been living in Winterhaven since 1953. Bramley added some information on lighting upkeep. "Our association voted \$2,000 for this year's bulb replacements for normal burn-out or damage, plus extra cords for coverage of tree growth."

Through three decades of renowned Christmas lighting, only one year, (1973's serious national energy crisis), were lights out.

With the two-week spectacle at an end, Winterhaven returns to normal vehicular and foot traffic existing in "Neighborhood U.S.A." For the next 50 weeks, day and night, the community on a Saturday morning is typical Home Street, America.

A couple of boats are towed at a 25 mile per hour Winterhaven speed limit. Joggers and bikers abound. Trash bags are trundled out to curbs. Dogs are walked. Grocery bags hustled indoors.

Within a home on a quiet street called Farr, on a wall opposite a picture window hangs an impressive, two-foot traveling trophy plaque. Above a chrome Santa Claus is the inscription:

WINTERHAVEN'S FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

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Seven members of the Stanley Brown family are aiming to keep the trophy right where it is, for another year anyway. Yet, within Winterhaven, folks living on Greenlee Street, some on McKenzie, and a few reported in from along Hardy Place all have some new ideas. **[D]**

A decade of CJ-5 jeeping into the out-back with cameras and notebooks is background for Dan B. McCarthy's numerous contributions to Desert, Four Wheeler, Arizona, Western Treasures and other national magazines. McCarthy is a part-time faculty member in the University of Arizona Journalism Department.



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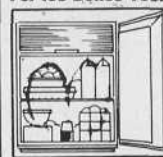
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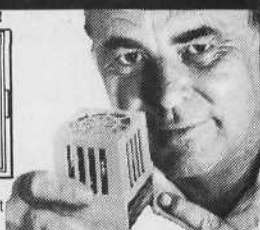
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THE DESERT ROCKHOUND

by Rick Mitchell

COLLECTING SITES

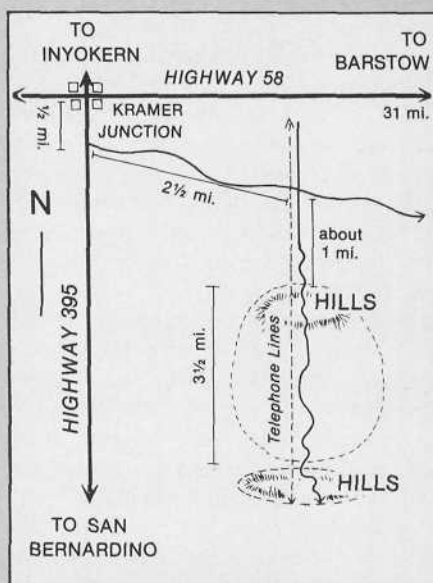
A few years ago, while spending the weekend near Barstow, California, I was introduced to a most productive collecting area. I had been taking some photographs of Rainbow Basin, a few miles north of town, when I met two rockhounds from San Bernardino. We spent a few hours together, and, in the course of our discussions, they invited me to accompany them to one of their favorite collecting spots in that part of the desert. I can't remember ever saying no when asked to visit a new rockhounding area, and, with no hesitation decided to join them for the evening near Kramer Junction.

We spent a few more hours exploring the unusual landscape of Rainbow Basin and then returned to Highway 58, proceeding west to where it intersects Highway 395, about 31 miles from Barstow. We filled our gas tanks in town and then headed south on Highway 395 for only $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. At that point, there is a dirt road heading to the east, which we followed until reaching the telephone lines, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the pavement. At the lines, we turned right and followed them for about one more mile, to the northern boundary of the collecting site.

It was late afternoon when we arrived. My friends had a favorite camping spot next to an agate seam, only a few hundred yards to the east of the road, just at the top of the first set of hills. If you prefer to camp a little further from the main road, additional campsites can be found by following any of the ruts leading through the valley.

After I had set up the tent and got my gear organized, it was nearly dark, but there was time to quickly chip a few pieces of colorful agate from the seam. On my way to the diggings, I found a beautiful pink piece of common opal, one of the finest I have ever found. It is about three inches long, two inches wide and flawless. I haven't cut it yet, since it is so nice just the way it is. At the agate deposit, I procured a few small chunks before darkness made further excavation impossible.

The next morning, my friends and I



One of Mitchell's most productive collecting sites, near Barstow, California.

worked the agate seam with chisels, sledge hammers and lots of energy. The effort is worth it, and if you are careful, some relatively large pieces can be obtained.

After having labored on the seam for most of the morning, it was time to give ourselves a rest and see the remainder of this most prolific collecting area. It extends from the crest of the first hills, into the valley for at least another mile to the south. There is agate, jasper and common opal scattered all over for quite a distance, on either side of the pole line road. The agate occurs in tones of blue and brown, while the jasper is in shades of yellow and red, some quite brilliant. My favorite collectable here, though, is the beautiful common opal. It is also the least prevalent, being found in pastel shades of pink and white.

Simply drive or walk into the valley to the south of the first ridge, and the material can be found. It takes some searching to find it, but there is plenty available. Since this site is so close to two major highways, it has been a prime desert rockhounding area for many years. It seems, though, that after each rain, new material is exposed and I have, in subsequent trips, never had trouble finding a quantity of fine cutting material in a

relatively short amount of time. Just don't expect it to be one of those places where you can fill a collecting bag while only having to take a few steps from your vehicle.

When hiking a distance from the pole line road, especially to the east, the concentration seems to increase. This is a great location to visit during the fall, winter or spring, but much too hot for summer rockhounding. I know you will want to return again after your first visit, just as I have done.

PUBLICATIONS

The 1982 *Standard Mineralogical Catalogue* has just been released, and is a most valuable reference for rockhounds. This is its fifth edition, and it features price guides for minerals and rocks. The new edition also gives price ranges and suggestions for evaluating rough material. Many of the sections have been expanded, especially in the areas of fossils, man-made gemstones and extraordinary materials. I have referred to my 1981 edition many times during the past year, and should get even more use out of the expanded 1982 version. The cost is \$4.75, plus 75 cents shipping, and it can be ordered from Mineralogical Studies, 1145 Foxfire Road, Kernersville, NC 27284.

The Geological Society of America has recently reprinted their well-respected guide, *Death Valley Region, California and Nevada*. It features a discussion of the terrain seen when traveling a loop through Death Valley, starting and finishing in Las Vegas. In addition, there are other sections giving details about the region, including minerals, mining and history. This is a useful publication for anyone curious about the geology of the region, and should make trips there more interesting. The cost is \$10, plus 50 cents shipping, and can be ordered from the Death Valley Publishing Company, Shoshone, CA 92384.

The diamond industry is offering a fascinating booklet titled "Everything You'd Love to Know About Diamonds." It contains 35 pages of color photographs and information about the world's premier gemstone, in-

cluding discussions about formation, occurrences, cutting, polishing and evaluation. I found this to be a very informative booklet and worth the \$1 fee charged to cover shipping and handling expenses. A copy can be ordered from Diamond Promotion, 3799 Jasper Street, Philadelphia, PA 19124.

Swest, Inc. is offering a brochure called "Mold Making: Everything you Need and Everything You Need to Know." The eight pages are filled with information about producing molds of all types and, even if you already make castings, I suggest obtaining a copy. It will be of use to all who are interested in this art, whether seasoned craftsmen or beginners. If you would like a free copy, simply contact Swest, Inc. at 10803 Composite Drive, Dallas, TX 75220.

EQUIPMENT

The Foredom Company has released the latest in their line of handpieces for miniature tools. This is the Number 35, and can increase an input speed of 14,000 rpm to 35,000 rpm. The very high speed is useful for intricate design work and carvings, especially on hard substances. This handpiece can be used with a variety of Foredom tools. More information can be obtained by writing Foredom, Bethel, CT 06801.

Gem Instruments Corporation now manufactures a device which allows the user to take photographs through microscopes such as the Diamond Grader, Diamondscope and Mark V Gemolite. It is called the PhotoScope, and employs a Polaroid Automatic EE 100 Special camera and coupling unit. It is only necessary to place the PhotoScope on the microscope, trip the shutter and a high-quality photograph of the stone or piece of jewelry will be ready in minutes. If you would like more information, write Gem Instruments Corporation, P.O. Box 2147, Santa Monica, CA 90406.


SCHOOLS

There is an institution in Eugene, Oregon, that specializes in teaching the art of refining precious metals. The courses cover general refining knowl-

edge, field refining, selling processed metals, platinum and silver recovery, and a host of other related subjects. Whether or not you actually plan to refine your own precious metals, the courses should be very useful and informative. In addition, equipment and chemicals are available. If you would like further information, contact the Oregon School of Gold and Silver Refining, Inc., 3709 Franklin Boulevard, Eugene, OR 97403.

HELPFUL HINTS

I have always had trouble polishing geodes on a vibrating lap. The problem, though, has not been in obtaining a polish, but with the cleaning afterward. Recently, I was told of a good way to solve this problem. Simply dissolve paraffin in turpentine or another such solvent and brush that solution throughout the crystal cavity. When the polishing is complete, use detergent and hot water to remove the paraffin coating. I have found this procedure not only helps prevent the crystals from being inundated with grit, but also thoroughly cleans the cavity.

Before cutting star garnets, I determine ray orientation by tumbling the rough in coarse or medium grit for a few days. By doing this, the rough exteriors can be smoothed. When examined wet, under strong sunlight, the star can be observed, and the stone cut properly. Be very careful not to over-tumble. Check at least every 12 hours, and as soon as a star can be detected, remove from the tumbler. If you don't spot a star on a particular piece, it is often worthwhile to allow it to be completely tumble-polished. I have found many additional, but usually weaker, stars by doing just that. 

Rick Mitchell has been exploring ghost towns and mines and collecting rocks and fossils throughout the Southwest for about 20 years. He has visited hundreds of locations during that time.



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Man, Mask and God

A personal experience of Hopi and Navajo religions.

By S. Lee Rourke

Suddenly they came. Out of the wide, infinite universe, out of myth and legend, out of the depths of America itself.

They came filing into the plaza, shaking gourd rattles, uttering strange cries. A line of creatures: part man, part beast, part bird. Bodies covered with paint, bodies wearing ceremonial dress, dancing feet clad in moccasins, bulging eyes glaring from great wooden heads—heads with long beaks and toothed snouts, square heads, round heads, cloud-terraced heads bearing the symbols of lightning and rain, hung with tufts of eagle feathers. They began dancing. Dancing as gods have always danced before their people.

As a young boy visiting an Indian reservation, this is how it was when I first saw a Kachina dance. I am a native American, educated in schools of Western culture. Years of comprehension crept through my mind before I understood; religious beliefs cannot be neatly or logically pigeon-holed into an instantly, comprehensive concept.

Religion has been described as man's attempt to control those forces which lie beyond the glow of his campfire. It matters little if the reference is made to a small band of Indians huddled around a sacred circle, or a modern city dweller who worries about the prospect of a nuclear fireball destroying his modern metropolis. The basic need is identical.

When discussing religion, either one's own or someone else's, it is best not to be too concerned about logic. All mythology, whether based on written or spoken traditions, is singularly illogical. In contrast, attempts to translate religious concepts from one language to another equally causes confusion: for example; there is no equivalent in the English vocabulary

Hopi Cloud Kachina brings summer rains.

for the Zuni word Koko (a Kachina-like object) or the Hopi word Kachina. The Zuni Indians have no equivalent for the English word religion; they regard religion as being inseparable from life itself.

The impact of Christianity upon the Southwestern Indian is difficult to summarize except in broad generalizations. A minority accepted Christianity to the complete abandonment of native practices. The majority merely accepted new doctrines by modifying them to fit native beliefs. Followers of the Native American Church (the Peyote Cult) combined native and Christian beliefs to form an entirely new religious movement. A surprising number of Hopi and Zuni practice their religion to the total exclusion of Christian beliefs.

This then is my experience with the Navajo Peyote Cult and the Hopi; an exploration into ceremonials, myths and beliefs. Their religious commitments are not intended to be peculiar or quaintly colorful. They are simply an account of attempts by fellow human beings to meet a basic need in ways which are different from religions of European influence.

Peyote is a small, turnip shaped, spineless cactus that grows in the lower Rio Grande valley from southern New Mexico southward to Nayarit, Mexico. It contains alkaloid substances (mainly mescaline), which are hallucinogenic in nature. Reactions to peyote seem to vary with the social situation in which it is used. To some, it merely causes nausea. Believers experience optic, olfactory and auditory sensations. Peyote was once used by the Indians during warfare; it revealed the enemy's location by means of a vision or by speaking to the user.

The purpose of ceremonial peyote varies: It may appear in rain-making rituals, or to induce visions of revelations. Drawing from Christian teaching, the Native American Church makes use of peyote as a sacrament. Peyotists claim the white man has the Bible to learn of God—the Indian was given peyote for the same purpose. Biblical passages are often quoted to justify its use, and reference to herbs are construed to include peyote.

The Native American Church stresses a high moral code of brotherly love, care of the family, self reliance and avoidance of alcohol.

Warrior Kachina appears in December ceremony to welcome the new year.



S. Lee Rourke

There is no federal law prohibiting the use of peyote. Arizona one passed legislation against its use, but declared the anti-peyote law unconstitutional in 1960.

The rapid spread of peyotism on the Navajo reservation in the late 1930s is attributed to the economic stresses caused by the government's livestock reduction program. When their way of life appeared to be threatened, the Navajo found a sense of security in peyote religion. The number of peyotists had grown to an estimated 40,000 by 1960. Today, the Peyote Cult claims over 200,000 followers.

I attended a peyote meeting as an observer during a visit to the Navajo reservation. The ceremony began at sundown in a hogan (home). Most of those present were in their late teens and early twenties. The brightly-colored ceremonial dress was a mixture of vests and shawls. Christian influence was apparent: the inclusion of rosaries and religious medals along with peyote beads.

A small fire of seven cedar sticks (touching at the points) was started with flint by the Fire Chief at dark. A small crescent-shaped mound of clean sand was laid in front of the fire. The Peyote Chief, with tobacco and corn husks for cigarettes, sat behind it. The Drum Chief, with a small water drum; the Fire Chief, with a turkey wing for sweeping the ashes into a crescent; and Cedar Man, with sage and cedar, sat next to him. Those ready to take the Peyote Road sat in a circle around them.

The ceremony was simple. The Peyote Chief placed a button of peyote the size of a small onion on the moon-shaped mound of sand. He rolled tobacco in a corn husk, passing the makings to his left. The Fire Chief lit the cigarette for the Peyote Chief and everybody else, passing it around the circle to the left.

When all had taken four puffs, the Peyote Chief prayed. Each in turn prayed after him. The sack of peyote buttons was now passed around to the left. Each took four, placing them on the floor before him. One at a time, they were cleaned with a knife, chewed into a fine paste, spat into his hands, rolled into a ball and then swallowed.

The Drum Chief began beating the water drum. The Peyote Chief sang four songs. Then the drum was passed along to the left, and each sang four songs. This continued all night.

Sage was passed around clockwise to rub over hands and face so that its

sharp clean smell would prevent dizziness. At midnight, water was passed to drink. More Peyote was passed around. The singing resumed.

At sunrise more water was brought in. Then the daughter of Peyote Chief served stewed fruit, corn and raw beef ground together and sweetened. I joined them in their feast. What I had experienced, excluding use of peyote, was not unlike some religious cults of our own society.

In the way of the Peyote Cult, the evening was spent in contemplation and communication with God, with peyote serving as a sacrament. Occasionally cult members will eat

They began dancing,
dancing as gods have
always danced before their
people.

peyote at other times during a prayer, but generally the belief is held that peyote does not work outside of meetings.

The successful worshipper may see visions or hear peyote "talk" to him; with instructions on how to solve problems, or improve his life. If he is sick or depressed, peyote may cure him.

Tribal members who follow traditional beliefs are upset over the introduction of the Peyote Cult. Missionaries working among Indians oppose peyote because it "misinterprets" Christian beliefs to accommodate the use of peyote. Despite opposition, the cult continues to grow.

Surrounded by the Navajo reservation, on the high and once inaccessible mesas, stand the isolated villages of the Hopi. That this proud nation structures its way of life on ancient myths and tribal customs is a tribute to the strength of their religious belief.

The religion of the Hopi in certain ways resembles that of ancient Greeks. It is polytheistic: there are many gods. It is also animistic: all inanimate objects, plant and animal, as well as some inanimate things, are believed to have spirits that the Hopi visualize in human form.

In the mind of the Hopi, there is not a sharp distinction between deities and spirits of objects: these spirits are the Kachinas which are often impersonated.

The key symbol of Hopi ceremonials is the Kachina. Kachinas are not really gods, but rather messengers—much like disciples of the Christian faith. It is believed they once lived with the Hopi people. When Kachinas emerged from the Underworld (the place of Hopi creation), they brought rain with their dances, but when the Hopi people became disrespectful, the Kachinas left them and went off to live by themselves. Before they departed, they taught the Hopi people how to perform their rituals.

Kachinas are spirits: Spirits of the dead, of all mineral, plant, animal and human forms that have traveled the road. They are spirits of mythical heroes, stars, clouds and color-directions.

Kachinas, then, are the inner forms—spiritual components of outer physical forms—which may be invoked with favorable powers so that man may continue his journey. They are the invisible forces of life.

Masks are also Kachinas. They hold spiritual powers. They may be abstract designs symbolically patterned and colored: representing animals and birds and insects; they may be animal or birdlike creatures with horns, hoofs, claws, snouts, beaks. Representing mythical heroes, they may be human forms appropriately dressed to designate their identities. Or they may be a combination of all these.

Every boy initiated into a Kachina group is given a mask. During his lifetime it is to be ceremonially fed and properly attended. When he dies, it is buried with the distinct understanding that its supernatural power must be isolated or given back when it is not under rigorous control.

Kachinas are also the men, the impersonators who wear the masks. During ceremonial time, dancers wearing masks have supernatural powers. In all pueblos they belong to special Kachina cult groups, societies or kivas (ceremonial chambers).

The number of Kachinas is unknown. In Hopi pueblos, there must be 200 or more that easily identified. Children are taught early in life their names and masks. While dancing in the plaza, Kachinas seek out the children who need to be punished. They surround a child, frighten him with their grotesque antics and ceremonially whip him with long yucca whips. Then, they thrust into his hands a small wooden Kachina in the image of one of themselves.

One of the strangest and least under-

stood rituals known to man brought me to the Hopi reservation—the Snake Dance. There is evidence that it was performed in most of the Rio Grande pueblos in pre-Spanish time. Today, it survives only in Hopi villages. The richness, grotesque imagery and barbaric beauty of this ritual is almost unbelievable and equally difficult to describe. Those who have not personally attended this bizarre pageant know little about it, because photography has been forbidden since the early 1920s.

The ceremony itself is based on a legend concerning a young Hopi brave who attempted to find the source of all waters by following the Colorado River to its headwaters. During a journey filled with dangers, he was assisted by Spider Woman; mythical creator of the Hopi.

He met the Great Snake who controlled the waters of the world from his kiva. The brave was initiated into the Snake tribe and taught their ceremonies. Before he returned to his own people, he married a young girl who had been transformed into a snake. All reptiles are believed to be descended from the original offspring of this couple.

I sat among young and old in the open plaza. Screaming, rhythmic, savage cries seemed to come with the wind. Figures in ceremonial dress entered the sacred circle: dancing forms with black eyes glittering; a fanatical gleam in faces painted black. White paint on their foreheads and around their mouths gave them a sinister appearance. Forearms and legs, below the knees, were white. Upper arms and breasts were decorated with splotches. Down each side of the back was a long oval-shaped decoration in white. Long hair hung loose to the shoulders, decorated with a small bunch of eagle feathers at the back of the head. Around their necks were fine silver, turquoise and shell beads. They wore woven kilts, which were blue with a double white line around the middle. Belts with long fringed ends circled their waists. Fox skin was fastened to a belt in the rear. Tied to each right knee was a tortoise shell rattle, and moccasins were of reddish-brown buckskin. Around the biceps were white armlets, with anklets above the moccasins.

I watched with fascination. I realized that I would probably never again see its equal: the two lines of chanting Indians, the mixed assembly of Hopi gathered on stone houses with the

colorful desert stretching out beyond the mesa.

The line of Snake men broke into groups of three: a carrier, a hugger and a gatherer. This was the most tense moment in the entire performance. All eyes were upon carrier and hugger. The carrier stooped for moment. He held a squirming rattlesnake in his mouth and started around the circle with a short, quick step. The hugger had taken a position immediately behind him; his left hand on the carrier's left shoulder, his right hand held the eagle feather snake whip. It would have been of no use in protecting the dancer's face.

Superstition, it should be remembered, is the other man's religion.

Each pair paused in front of the snakes. The carrier stooped down for a moment and was handed a reptile by the priest. In a few minutes, five pairs of priests were dancing around the sacred circle chanting above the buzzing of angry rattlesnakes. The gatherers hovered on the edge of the circle, ready to pounce upon a serpent as soon as it was placed upon the ground.

Among the carriers was a 10 or 11-year-old boy. I learned later that this was his first Snake Dance. The first reptile he received was a big diamondback that almost touched the ground. He held it in his mouth, several inches back of the head, with the fearlessness of youth and proudly performed.

After each carrier had danced four times around the circle, he laid his snake down and returned to the priest for another. The instant the serpent was released it tried to escape, but a gatherer swooped down upon it. He seized the snake with a movement almost too quick for the eye and calmly walked back to the line of dancers with the venomous head dangling about his legs. Then he transferred it to his left hand, and put another rattler in his right. He was only a few feet from me. With fascination and fear, I watched the serpent coil around his forearm and clearly saw the deadly head dart back and forth along the man's arm as if it were anxious to bite. Then I remembered; a rattlesnake cannot strike unless coiled.

Occasionally a large rattler did coil ready to fight as soon as released, but a few motions of a snake whip caused it to uncoil. The gatherer, with a sudden grab, snatched it up.

As I watched the writhing, venomous rattlesnakes, the weirdly picturesque dancers and spectators, it was difficult to realize I was still in the United States. This was more like a scene one would expect in the jungles of darkest Africa, but I was in Arizona. It was the last frontier of such wild pageants.

After the snakes were carried around the circle for the last time, the chief stepped to the middle of the plaza. Gatherers formed around him as he made a large circle of sacred cornmeal with six radiating lines from the center. These represented the six directions of Hopi mythology; north, west, south, east, up to the heavens or sun and down to the Underworld. When this was completed he gave a signal; the gatherers threw their snakes in a large pile in the circle. As they wriggled and twisted he said a prayer to the gods. At its conclusion, the Snake men leaped forward and plunged their hands into the deadly, squirming mass of snakes, each man trying to get as many serpents as possible. As soon as one succeeded, he darted down the mesa trail, followed by others. The snakes were carried far out into the desert and released to carry prayers of the Hopi people for rain to save their crops.

Dancers were repeatedly bitten by the venomous reptiles. The Hopi medicine man applied a potion that is said to immediately counteract snake bite.

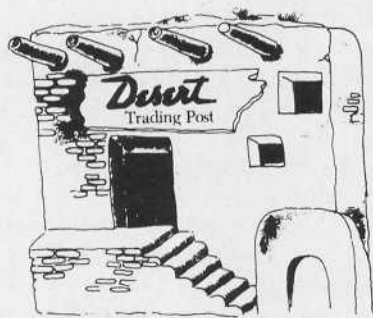
Before the last snake had been carried around the sacred circle, great, black clouds billowed over the plains. The sun cast a kaleidoscope of awesome colors against a distant mountain. That night, I watched with disbelief as rain fell in Hopi land.

Superstition, it should be remembered, is the other man's religion. **Z**

S. Lee Rourke is an avid backpacker, conservationist, writer and photographer. The traditional cultures of the native American provide him with another way to see and appreciate the beauty of nature. He is currently writing books on desert survival and Utah ghost towns.



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